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JOHN

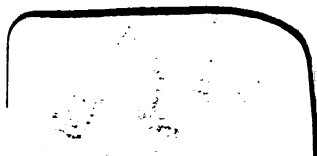


MARMADUKE



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“ ‘Stay, Saxon,’ she cried. ‘My brother has done you no harm.’ ”

(See page 23.)

JOHN MARMADUKE

ROMANCE OF THE ENGLISH INVASION OF
IRELAND IN 1649

BY

SAMUEL HARDEN CHURCH

Author of "Oliver Cromwell: A History"

A FOURTH IMPRESSION

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1903



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(See page 23.)

JOHN MARMADUKE

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“ ‘Stay, Saxon,’ she cried. ‘My brother has done you no harm.’ ”

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“‘Stay, Saxon,’ she cried. ‘My brother has done you no wrong.’”

JOHN MARMADUKE

A ROMANCE OF THE ENGLISH INVASION OF
IRELAND IN 1649

BY

SAMUEL HARDEN CHURCH

Author of "Oliver Cromwell: A History"

EIGHTH IMPRESSION

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To
MY MOTHER



PREFACE

THE most misunderstood incident in the Commonwealth period of English history is the invasion of Ireland by the Parliamentary army in 1649.

After the publication of the book, *Oliver Cromwell: A History*, some three years ago, it occurred to me that a further elucidation of that matter might be effected by means of an historical romance. I therefore went to Ireland and traced again the line of the Cromwell invasion; and gave some studious attention to the ancient language and literature of that country.

Then came this story.

The feelings which controlled John Marmaduke's Scoutmaster were largely the feelings of the entire English army and nation. May's *History*, giving an exaggerated description of the Irish massacres of English settlers in the plantation of Ulster, had been in print for two years. The Parliamentarians had all read it with horror and had resolved to avenge the atrocities it narrated,—yea, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Yet, save for the mighty figure that dominates the last chapters, this novel is wholly a romance.

If my story throb with big ambitions and bounding passions, if it have the rude alarum of war, the fierce

shout of revenge, and the plaintive note of doubting love,—while all that is fiction, and figment, and vain imagining, still is it always the story of human life—History, one might say, in the embellished garb of Fiction.

S. H. C.

September 3, 1897.





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JOHN MARMADUKE

CHAPTER I

THE SCOUTMASTER'S STORY

IT was high noon on a dry, hot day in August, in the year 1649. General Henry Ireton had halted a section of the Parliament's army near Arklow, in the county of Wicklow, and lay waiting for the Lord General Cromwell, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to come hither from Dublin to direct our reconnaissance in the enemy's country. The officers and men of my troop of horse, being a hundred all told, had finished the midday meal, and most of them were looking after the comfort of the beasts.

Some six of us had tarried under a great shade tree, for digestion's sake ; and I had spoken of my hope that the conquest of Ireland might go forward without the unnecessary sacrifice of human life.

"Your sentiments are very humane, Captain Marmaduke," said David Potton, my Scoutmaster, "and they would do honour to your mind, but the people against whom you desire to conduct a merciful war are not only

the public enemies of England ; they are the unpunished murderers of the flower of England's population."

When I spoke of mercy to the defenders the Scout-master's deep-set eyes kindled with a glowing and baleful fire. He rose from the grass and stood full three inches above six feet before the table at which I sat. He was gaunt and lean, and his cheekbones were made boldly prominent by the sunken holes under them. Besides bone and muscle, there was not much under his tight skin, and his strength was that which is ascribed to giants. He had joined the Ironsides just before Marston Moor battle, when I was a Cornet under my Lord Essex. Then, after I had won my Captain's commission at Preston fight, where we destroyed Duke Hamilton's army, and I was given command of an unattached troop of horse, David Potton became my Scoutmaster. He was a zealous Puritan and a man who feared no danger even when death seemed to be the inevitable end of the risk. I had never seen him smile but once, and that was when we began our march for Ireland. When the bugle set our long, winding column in motion, he ejaculated the words, "At last !" and smiled in a strange, satanic way.

"Nay, David," I said, after hearing his speech ; "the Irishry have inflicted many cruelties upon our former English settlers,—they have brought us hither by an atrocious massacre, for which they will be required to render a sufficient account, ere we are done, fear not. But they, on their side, have had great provocation. We have despoiled them of their lands and goods, we have oppressed them in their religion. And so I say, conquer them we must, but let us do it like Christian soldiers, when they force us not to extremities."

"Extremities, Captain," repeated the Scoutmaster, with an unwonted disdain. "The Lord do so unto me if ever David Potton spare the life of an Irish foe under arms."

"But why this bitter and savage hatred of the Irish?" I asked. "You have been in Ireland before, I know——"

"Oh, God!" he answered, with an accent of agony which thrilled us all into close attention. "Would you know why? You think me a savage now; you will regard me as a fiend, perhaps, later on. So be it, then, if you will have it, that you shall hear my story."

He drank deep from a pitcher of water on my camp-table, and then sat upon the trunk of a tree which our men had felled for firewood the day before.

"I came here with a thousand settlers to till the land that I had bought and paid for of the London corporation. With me were my wife and our son, a boy of eight, with blue eyes and golden hair,—such a boy as our Cavalier painters would use in the background to throw light and beauty into the canvas on which they picture their warriors. When we arrived here they told us we were invaders, but I know nothing of that; we had paid the money and ere long we were put in legal possession. The war in England soon absorbed the Irish garrison. There was no longer military protection, and the native inhabitants, going from one aggression to another, began to commit those depredations on the English settlers which soon became a universal outrage and butchery. Thousands of Englishmen were cut down in their flight, and their wives and children were slain with them. Indignities were put upon them which even now my tongue refuses to describe; not the worst of these were that some men were hanged and stabbed;

others had their noses and ears cut off. Women had their legs cut off at the knees. Many persons were thrown from bridges into the rivers and drowned ; others were driven naked, aye, stark naked, Captain, through the chilling blasts of the November nights."

The Scoutmaster's face assumed a stony stare and he looked hard at the ground, seemingly oblivious of the army around him as well as of the listening group under the tree. We exchanged glances, but no man spoke. Out on the surging waters of the ocean our troop-ships floated lazily at anchor.

"I and my wife and our sweet boy," said David Potton, soon continuing his narrative, "were in that company of unhappy creatures who were bound fast and then stripped of the last vestige of clothing, and made to tramp through the snow and over the frozen ground all night long until we reached the sea-coast the next morning, scarcely more than alive, and everyone wishing for a speedy death. Black Murtagh was the leader of our captors,—he was called 'Black' because of the raven beard which covered his infernal face clear to his eyes. A small vessel stood anchored near the shore and we were told that in it we were to be sent back to England. The hope of this restoration to our native land somewhat mitigated the fearful cruelty of our condition,—for mind you, there were more than two hundred of us, of both sexes and of all ages, in that wretched group. A boat was loaded with our people and sent out to the ship, and then returned for more. In the course of an hour all but a score had been thus conveyed and in the next boat-load my wife and son were despatched. They bade me no adieu ; our common shame was such that there was no possibility of that, with those gloating devils

reviling our condition. But my wife gave me one swift glance of love and hope ; my boy smiled, too, as the boat receded ; and I saw them soon on the deck of the ship where my wife quickly arrayed them both under the rude shelter of a piece of sail-cloth."

"It soon came your turn, David," I said. "You said there were but a few remaining."

Again came the stony glare into the Scoutmaster's face, and again the sad silence which neither I nor my officers would violate.

"There were ten of us left," said the Scoutmaster, at length, "ten men, all bound fast, mind you, and Black Murtagh told us the ship was full and no more would be sent on board. This information was the most bitter incident of our suffering, thus far ; but even now we were glad that our dear ones were assured of a safe return to England, and we hoped soon to be restored to them through the providence of God. The little boat that had served as tender to the vessel returned and all of our tormentors returned in her, leaving none but the refugees to go to sea. This seemed passing strange, for the anchor had been hauled in, the tiller had been tied down, the mainsail had been set, and the ship was started straight out to sea, so far as we knew, without course, compass, or chart. The little boat had reached the shore and the foul fiends who were in her had rejoined the group that surrounded us, when the blood in my veins seemed suddenly to freeze with horror, for I thought I detected the vessel settling. She had not gone too far for me to plainly distinguish the sweet faces of my wife and boy, and I could see the vague look of terror which possessed them both. I stole one quick look at the hairy face of that head devil, Black Murtagh,

and then,—Oh, God help me !—I knew all. When my eyes again caught the slowly receding ship I saw my wife and son waving their arms to me in helpless despair,—the pretty lad even threw me a kiss,—there was one prolonged shriek of agony from those on board,—if I live a thousand years I shall never cease to hear it,—and then the vessel went to the bottom of the ocean like a stone, and every soul on board went with her.”

The officers who had thus far listened to the Scoutmaster’s story in a sympathy which was too deep for words, now broke out into execrations on this atrocity. David Potton was insensible to every sound ; but soon he continued :

“Well, Captain, the rest is brief. I cursed those men as surely man never cursed before, hoping that they would send us, also, to instant death. They merely laughed at our impotent agony, and very soon Black Murtagh set us free to go whither we would, our hands, however, still being bound. After a while we obtained clothing and made our way to Dublin, and thence to England where we enlisted for the wars. All of my companions have since been killed or have died from their exposure in Ireland. I alone am left, and for what purpose am I spared, Captain, if not for vengeance ? I have never seen Black Murtagh again, but he and I will meet each other,—yea, I have come to Ireland to meet him.”

Again came that smile on the Scoutmaster’s face,—that strange, satanic smile so terrible in its meaning that no one of us cared to speak, and we therefore went out to groom our horses, as we had been taught to do by the Lord General Cromwell, leaving David Potton on the trunk of the tree, silent and alone.



CHAPTER II

THE BLACK MARE

AT the time of coming into Ireland I was just thirty years old. My family, for several hundred years, had lived in Yorkshire, where we had somewhat large landed possessions. My father, Sir William Marmaduke, was related to Sir Marmaduke Langdale, the King's General. No one regretted more deeply than my father the unhappy controversies between King Charles the First and his Parliament; but when the dispute was pushed to civil war both my father and myself took sides with the people because we sincerely believed it was time to put an end to absolute monarchy in England. My father was slain at the first battle, Edgehill, after which, with my mother's consent, I enlisted in the Parliamentary army as Cornet, and rose to a captaincy as the reader has already been told.

My stature is a good six feet and my build is big in proportion. I have been well trained in the accomplishments of a gentleman, but my delight has always been in riding and fencing, and these arts have served me well in my career as a soldier. At the time of which I am writing I had never been in love, not because my heart was not impressionable, but because my employment in

the affairs of my country had kept me almost wholly away from the society of ladies. This pleased my mother well, for she always told me that marriage was the most serious business of a man's life, and that he should think upon it only when he was free from all other occupation, so that when he chose his wife it would be done soberly and advisedly. I believe my mother was right in this.

That good lady had, however, already endeavoured to select a wife for me herself ; and on my last visit to Yorkshire, shortly before the King's execution, she had brought the Lady Betty Forrester to visit at our house. Lady Betty was the fifth daughter of an Earl. Now, Lady Betty had been the playmate of my youth, and oftentimes she had climbed upon my knee and then to my broad shoulders, whence she would jump into a tree, or down on the soft grass, in most innocent merriment. She would peer at me with laughing eyes through her golden hair, and her pink cheeks soon deepened their colour when we romped through our games. Young Lord Alfred Paddleford played with us in those days, and when he would carry Betty off to be his slave I would ride forth on an imaginary steed and rescue her, frequently killing Lord Alfred for his villainy.

But when we met again Lady Betty had become a woman and I a soldier. A very pretty woman she was, too, but somewhat shy. No amount of coaxing on my part could induce her to call me Jack ; "Captain John" was as near as she would come to a familiar style. I spoke of the old play-days—ah, how hungrily my heart went back to our happy gambols !—but she would only say, with some disdain, that she must have been a very froward child.

My mother made it her especial duty, on every suitable occasion, to call my attention to Lady Betty's beauty. I granted this and extolled it suitably myself ; but Lady Betty and I never seemed to come again into the enchanted confidence of the olden times. It happened somewhat suddenly that I was sent for to go on the Irish business. My mother said, as I departed, that if occasion granted she would bring Lady Betty to Ireland ; Lady Betty smiled and pressed my hand ; and I sped away.

On the day when David Potton told the story of his treatment in the Irish massacre, I had given my good horse, Dick, his dinner, and rubbed down his glossy brown coat and his four white stockings until he was a thing of rare beauty. Caring for my horse was one of the chief pleasures of my life and a duty which was never committed to a subordinate all through my service in the army. Our General had exacted this attention to the horses from every man who served under him, whether officer or private, and if there was any who thought it at first a degrading employment, he soon grew to love it, and with it to love his horse ; and became a better soldier thereby.

"There, Dick," said I, "you are as fine a gentleman as ever enlisted in his country's service, and now I have saved you a sweet-cake from my own dinner, and here it is. Oh, you rascal, you knew I had it. Look at him, Thornton Willoughby,—is he not the paragon of beasts?"

Lieutenant Thornton Willoughby, of my troop, was sauntering towards me, having got his own horse in shape. A handsome fellow he was, with soft white hands and a mouth like a girl's. I loved Willoughby, for he was a brave soldier, but there was an element of

weakness in him that sometimes filled my mind with fear lest his integrity might not endure against the snares of life.

"Aye, Captain," he answered, slapping Dick on the neck, "he is a very Bucephalus, and carrieth a worthy rider to the battle. Nay, protest not, Captain Marmaduke! But when, think you, shall we come at these Irish? I ache to pay the churls back in their own coin."

"The Scoutmaster has infected you with his own revengeful spirit," I said. "Think you that all our men have this bloodthirsty feeling, Willoughby?"

"Near all of them, I verily believe," he answered, "and with due cause, if ever war be just."

"Nay," I said, "remember their provocations."

"But what is this?" cried Willoughby.

His exclamation was caused by a shout from some of the soldiers, and upon looking round I saw a prisoner brought in under a strong guard in charge of Corporal Reuben Wilton, of my troop, and conducted in the direction of my tent.

"What a splendid horse he rides!" said Willoughby.

The prisoner was mounted on a black mare, the beauty, symmetry, and strength of which were so surpassing that I was seized with an instant jealousy because she was superior to my Dick. Her rider was about two-and-twenty years of age, and of slight build for a man. His face was full of the happy flush of youth and without the slightest sign of beard. His brown locks fell in curls on his neck and his brown eyes were filled with anger over his arrest. His costume was elegant, befitting a gentleman of wealth.

"My service to you, Captain Marmaduke," said Cor-

poral Wilton, saluting me. "While out for forage under your instructions, we met this young gentleman, who refused to give an account of himself, and we have brought him here for further examination."

The prisoner flamed with scorn. "The ruffians had never brought me here," he cried, "had they not seized me unawares while I was giving my horse a drink."

"Good sir, why do you not keep an eye to dangerward when you slake your horse's thirst?" demanded Thornton Willoughby, with ironical gravity.

"If you are in command," he said, addressing me and ignoring Willoughby, "why am I here?"

He was very angry, and I could see that he was a wilful, headstrong boy who had thus far had things his own way.

"You are here, pretty sir," said Willoughby, "because our rude soldiers brought you here."

"Young sir," I said, "I am sorry if our men have put you to any inconvenience. But it will be necessary for me to know your name, after which I shall have the honour of presenting you to General Ireton."

"My name, then," said he, "is Terence Dillon, son of Sir Patrick Dillon, Knight of Carberry Hall, ten miles north of this camp. I am taking the air, and by your favour, sir, I will forego the honour of the meeting which you propose."

It was well spoken, and there was an air of breeding and purpose in the youth that won me to him.

"Mr. Dillon," said I, "you have made a frank answer. But since you are here I cannot escort you out of the camp without first presenting you to General Ireton."

"Who is now here," said Willoughby to me.

A soldier approached. He was in middle age, of or-

dinary height. His face was right well covered by a brown beard and mustache, and stamped with intellectual brightness and rugged, open honesty. His expression was genial and humane, yet there was a craft in it, which meant that the world should be taken with due suspicion of its sincerity. He wore the camp-dress of a Parliamentary General,—buff fatigue-coat, soft hat of light colour and large fashion, breeches to the knee, and military boots. A sword hung by his side. In spite of the carelessness of his attire, his manner carried the full dignity of authority, and there was but one officer whom we Ironsides loved above him,—even he whose daughter Bridget was General Ireton's wife.

"Captain Marmaduke," he said, "who have we here?"

"A prisoner, sir," I answered, saluting him, "brought in by Corporal Wilton, of my troop. Even now I was about to escort him to your tent. His name is Mr. Terence Dillon, son of Sir Patrick Dillon, of Carberry Hall, ten miles north of here, and he says that he was merely taking the air when our men arrested him."

"A rank Papist by his name," said Scoutmaster Potton, who had been attracted to the scene.

"Taking the air may mean a great many things in these troublous times," said General Ireton, scanning the prisoner searchingly. "Methinks, young man, that your ride after the air has been somewhat prolonged to-day,—eh, ten miles you say?"

"Bess can do twice that and still be fresh," said Dillon. "I have given all the explanation I can offer, sir," he continued, pouting his lips. "Since might makes right here I wait your further pleasure."

"Since making our camp here," said General Ireton,

"I have learned something of your family in connection with the operations of our enemies. I regret to put your person to the inconvenience of a search. This will be made with due apologies."

When the General said this the prisoner turned pale and trembled on his horse. The General noted his distress and paced beside Bess toward the outskirts of the camp. He beckoned me to follow, which I did, taking Lieutenant Willoughby and the Scoutmaster with me.

When we had passed out of the hearing of the curious crowd, the General spoke again.

"Now, sir, your papers, Mr. Dillon, if you please. Nay, young man," he cried, angrily, while Willoughby seized Bess's bridle, "do not attempt to put spurs to your horse! Scoutmaster, is your piece loaded?"

"Yes, General, to kill an Irishman on sight," replied the Roundhead.

"Then, once more, Mr. Dillon, your papers."

Dillon gave a last look at his surroundings. Believing escape to be impossible, he drew a letter from the breast of his doublet and handed it reluctantly to General Ireton.

The General read the superscription aloud. "To Lord Castlehaven." Then, breaking the seal, he said: "From the Marquis of Ormond. Indeed, Captain Marmaduke, your capture is an important one, and I will be glad to meet all other Irish gentlemen hereafter who ride to take the air."

He read the letter aloud. It was as follows:

"My dear Lord: His Majesty, King Charles the Second, has been proclaimed by the Scots, but would come to Ireland rather than to Scotland. His Majesty is now near the Island of Jersey with a fleet, and he

longs to give Cromwell a beating. Prince Rupert, with three good ships of war, is near us. We think Cromwell aims at Drogheda, and would advise that the place be efficiently guarded. The Prince will send you information from his flag-ship ashore near Carberry Hall to-night. All looks well. I rest, my Lord, &c.

“ORMOND.”

General Ireton folded the letter, smiling from a sense of satisfaction. “His Majesty longs to give Cromwell a beating,” he said. “His Majesty! Young man, the only Majesty of England is its Law! This letter is worth much, and you shall remain our guest for bringing it hither. The packet that is to come ashore to your house to-night will be still more precious; we must secure that.”

He was about to place the document in his pocket when the prisoner suddenly seized it, and digging his spurs into his horse’s flanks, “By your leave, sir,” said he, and sped away like the wind, fairly riding over Willoughby, who sprang at his bridle.

“Quick, fire!” cried the General. There was no need for the order, for the Scoutmaster had already raised his gun and fired. But the *schnaphance* lock on his piece worked slowly, and as the bullet sped harmlessly away, the flying horseman turned saucily in his saddle and laughed defiantly.

“Curse him!” cried Potton. “But I promise it to him another time.”

General Ireton was discomfited, but he took the escape with a nonchalant air. “To be forewarned is to be forearmed,” said he. “We have seen his letter and it can do us no harm now. But you, Captain Marmaduke, do you assemble your troop and go with all

expediency to Carberry Hall after this young man. You may be able to intercept Prince Rupert's letter to Castlehaven to-night. At any rate, the Dillons are a nest of malignants, and I would have that black mare as a gift for the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Do you go and fetch her. I have seen no finer steed in Ireland."





CHAPTER III

AN ODD DUEL

ACCOUTRED and mounted, with a commissary good for forty-eight hours, my troop of horse was ready for service in less than half an hour after I received the General's command to follow young Dillon.

With Scoutmaster David Potton and Lieutenants Thornton Willoughby and Elijah Haddon at their front, the troop waited for me to lead them. I rode to the head of my company, and turned my horse to inspect them. There was nothing in the appearance of the men, their arms, or their horses that would fail to delight the eye of the most careful commander. I gave the word, "Forward!"—and we were off at full trot.

We had proceeded two miles northward along the level sea-coast when the road shot suddenly inland, and we found ourselves going up a somewhat steep path through a wood. It was not long before we reached a tableland, when we rode straight ahead for three miles and came again in view of the sea, this time from a promontory which showed us a bend in the coast line whereby our fleet and camp were lost to sight.

As we pursued our way I called the Scoutmaster to my side.

"David," I said, "you have been in Ireland before. Is the face of nature here so beautiful always?"

"Yes," he said, reluctantly.

"England has had much trouble in keeping her conquest here."

"Yes," he replied, "this country was invaded by the English in Henry II.'s time, by Strongbow, and it has been the curse of England ever since."

"That is certainly a new way to put it, David."

"With all its cost of blood and treasure how can you view it otherwise? What has its possession yielded to England but reproach? Ireland has never had a national organisation, she has never had a flag, nor a dynasty, nor a capital city, nor a national judicial system. She never made these institutions for herself, and England never supplied them to her. Yet, strangely enough, when she has been loyal to England at all, her allegiance has been held by Irish soldiers, not by invading English armies."

"Who are the tories?" I inquired.

"Wild men who inhabit the bogs and mountains. There are many such here in Wicklow. They are wilder than the wolves, and more ferocious. Once, when I was riding alone near this road, a score of tory women sprang out at me, and e'er I could draw a weapon they slew my horse by thrusting their long knives into his belly. I sprang to one side, and in amasement beheld the famished hags cut the flesh from the beast and eat it raw. So intent were they on this bloody repast that they forgot me, and I stole away to my friends. The great aim of the tories is to get the cattle and horses of the English settlers."

"And what consideration have these tories from their own countrymen?" I asked.

"The consideration they give to wolves," he said, "A shot or a stab,—it is great sport for some of them."

"Do the tories enlist in the Irish garrisons?"

"No ; the tories stay to themselves. But many of the English settlers, or their descendants, have joined the Irish military parties, although there are so many factions that you could not get them under one banner, nor five, either, I doubt."

By this time my troop had ridden nearly the ten miles of our journey, and I noted that the sea was growing angry from an approaching storm, and lashing the rocks below us with boisterous fury. Emerging from a wood, we came suddenly in sight of Carberry Hall.

We rode straight up to the iron gate, in front of which I halted my brave troop, and peered through the massive bars. Within I saw a two-story house of white stone having gable roofs and dormer windows, with creeping vines and clinging roses on every wall. I could see from the long front of the house and its two retreating wings, that the hospitable builder of a hundred years back had designed the edifice to shelter his friends as well as his family. A stone walk lay before the front door, and from the edge of this stone, some three hundred feet from where I stood, a lawn sloped down to the gate which barred our entrance. A score of huge oak-trees gave their shade to the lawn, while here and there a short-cropped evergreen dotted the fresh sward. A broad path to the right and left of the gate circled the lawn in its generous width, and led to the door of the house in either direction. A strong wall of stone eight feet high, and pierced only by this gate, was built round the house, leaving pleasure grounds of good dimensions on every hand.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and I saw gathered on the lawn directly in front of the house a company of some thirty persons composed of men-at-arms and servants, about half-and-half. At their head was an elderly man whom I took to be Sir Patrick Dillon. He looked to be fifty, and his face held an expression of fierce and bitter hatred. He wore the iron hat and steel back- and breast of our time, which, with the sword at his side, made him look fully ready for war. My eye detected that he had hastily gathered his men together and armed them, the serving-men as well as the others, and that he would now attempt the defence of his home if he found any chance to hold it. At his side was his piper, most picturesquely dressed, and holding his curious instrument ready to play.

"William Cozens," I cried, turning to my trumpeter, "do you wind him a summons."

The merry note of the horn was quickly answered by the appearance on the wall of two men on either side of the gate. They had stood concealed until my challenge brought them directly above me. At the same instant the leader walked straight across the lawn toward us, followed by his guard, with piper playing. When he drew near the gate, I said :

"My service to you, sir. Are you Sir Patrick Dillon?"

"The same," he answered, brusquely, eyeing our English uniforms with a disgust which he did not attempt to conceal.

"Then, I am Captain John Marmaduke, of the English Parliament's army, and I must pray you to open this gate, or if you do not, myself and my men will go over your wall, and we would much prefer to go in on our horses."

"To the walls!" he cried. "Fifteen of you on each side, quick!"

The order was executed with bungling skill, and I saw thirty men stand above us, preparing with swords and guns to oppose our assault. Sir Patrick seemed ready to burst with rage, but he had evidently counted our numbers, and, having made an effective demonstration, he now glanced at the remaining men round him, and answered me, in a wish to waste time.

"For what purpose," he inquired, "is the honour of this visit paid me, may I ask?"

"That I shall impart to you presently," I answered; "but first oblige me by opening your gate. Nay, sir!" I cried, as he stood stock still, "we are an armed host bent on hostile work, and I mean not to dally with you."

There was a shot from the wall and a bullet pinged past my ear. Sir Patrick looked furiously at the marksman, who had apparently not waited for his order. But my command was instantly given:

"Forward!—to the right and left! Let every other man in each rank mount the wall!" And with the Scoutmaster and Haddon leading the charge on one side, and Lieutenant Willoughby on the other, it was merry work for the Ironsides. On receiving my order the whole troop rode straight at the wall, one half on either side of the gate. Every alternate man threw his bridle to his comrade, and, springing to his feet in the saddle, with sword in hand, endeavored to gain the wall. The other men, while guarding the horses, prepared to pick off the defenders with their carbines. From my mounted position in front of the gate I could watch the assault on both sides, and I carefully directed the movements of my men until I saw that they had secured the

wall and driven the others over it with many broken heads and some graver injuries by which to remember our English blows.

"Now, Sir Patrick Dillon," I cried, when there was a moment's pause in the fight, "if you open not your gates at once I will renew the assault and will grant you no quarter."

As the Irish knight looked upon the stout troopers who already stood on the wall, five-and-twenty on each side of the gate, he divined that at my next command they would alight within ; and his stomach came down. Without uttering a further word he opened the gate and then retraced his steps across the lawn, followed by his men, among them being his son, young Terence, who, I somehow think, had fired at me from the wall.

I rode through the gateway, all my men who were still mounted following me with the led horses. When we had all entered I gave the word to the men on the walls, who straightway came down and got upon their steeds. I again divided my troop to the right and left and we rode around the lawn five abreast each way, I to the right with twenty-five men, and Lieutenant Willoughby to the left with the Scoutmaster and an equal number, leaving one half of my troop at the gate with Lieutenant Haddon. We thus came together, Willoughby, the Scoutmaster, and I, in front of the door, and, after telling off ten men to go with Willoughby to the rear of the house in each direction and stop any who should come or go, I dismounted and stood before Sir Patrick, who had already gained the door with his men. His son had disappeared ; but I saw that there were now present two priests, a short, fat one, and a tall, lean one, at which my men instantly murmured.

"Now, Sir Patrick," said I, in the sternest voice I could assume, "I demand the surrender of your son, Mr. Terence Dillon, who is the bearer of letters threatening the peace and safety of the Commonwealth of England. Furthermore, the black horse ridden by him to-day I shall take for the service of the Parliament's army. Again, I shall hold possession of this your manor of Carberry Hall until I receive command from General Ireton to relinquish it."

He would have consigned us to perdition if he could have done it,—the expression of his face conveyed as much. But he was too completely overmastered. With the hate still in his eyes, he replied :

"My son is not present, nor is his horse."

"Let search be made through the house at once, Reuben Wilton," I said, "for Mr. Terence Dillon."

"I am here," said young Dillon, emerging from the house, "at your service."

"Mr. Dillon," I said, "you will oblige me by giving into my keeping that letter which was in your bosom this day ; also, you will render yourself my prisoner ; and, furthermore, you will deliver into my charge your black horse, Bess."

"The letter you demand," he replied, assuming his old air of defiance, "is sped out of my hands these two hours ; the black horse is the pet of my sister Catherine, and is not to be disturbed from its stall ; and for myself, I would fain cross swords with you, sir, before parting with a thing I value so much as my liberty. Therefore, draw you, Captain Marmaduke, if you are a true man."

He drew his sword, and Scoutmaster Potton advanced with a file of troopers, now dismounted, and would have seized him had I not forbidden them.

"It is a fair challenge," I said, drawing my sword.
"Let all stand back."

"Are you mad, Captain?" asked the Scoutmaster, angrily. "He is already your prisoner and has no right to this combat."

"Nay," I said, carelessly. "I will but give him a lesson in fencing. So stand back, I pray you."

I was about to step before my fretting challenger when a young lady came out of the house, who instantly caused my heart to beat furiously upon my ribs. I divined at once that she was the sister of my antagonist, and about two years younger than he, for never were two flowers on a stalk more like each other than were Terence and Catherine Dillon. The red and full face, the pouting mouth, the arched brows, the teeth of pearl, the brilliant, furious eyes of deep brown, the curling hair on her neck, and the angry contraction on her noble forehead, made the counterpart in ideal resemblance of the youth whose sword was drawn to fight against mine.

"Stay, Saxon!" she cried, in a voice so rich and deep that there was the charm of music even in its rage. "Why do you invade our home? My brother has done you no harm. As for the black horse, it is my pet and property. I warn you, sir, that there are those who will punish this wicked invasion!"

She stood before me with clinched hands and swelling bosom, more beautiful than any woman I had ever seen. My heart was still doing double work in its seat of life. I would gladly have refrained from the duty I stood charged to perform; but my men were watching me eagerly, and my prestige as a soldier was at stake.

"Fair lady," I said, "these are the unpleasant tasks of war. I must do what I have said."

"Stand aside, Catherine," cried her brother, beside himself with passion. "Here you go, sir," and with the words he came upon me with all his fury. The youth was but as a child in my hands. It was thrust and parry as I willed it to be ; and when he found that he could not beat down my guard, and that I was making no effort to wound him, the anger in his face gave way to a humiliation beyond disguise. When I felt his wrist weakening I gave his blade a twist which sent it flying into the air, and it struck hilt up in the ground at his sister's feet.

I felt sincere regret at his discomfiture, and was in the act of sheathing my weapon when Catherine seized his sword and attacked me with an impetuosity which required me to instantly defend myself. "Nay," I said, taking her thrust on my blade and stepping backward as she pressed on, "I cannot fight a woman !" I was half-indignant and half-amused at the position in which her hatred had placed me ; but I was also amazed at her skill. With her whole body erect,—and she was tall as women go, although her head was not above my shoulder,—she gave a thrust which would have pierced my steel cuirass had I not parried it. When she gave me *carte* and *tierce* I observed her right foot advance and the left arm ascend so that the *equipoise* of her body was perfectly preserved. She had learned the art of fencing from no mean master, for while her fury increased as she found my resistance impassable, she was ever alert, steady, and full of a grace that bewitched me even while I saw her trying to kill me. Her body moved to the rhythm of our encounter and her wrist seemed never to tire. It was *carte guard*, thrust, low *carte* ; then *quinte* thrust and parade ; and *prime* parade and

thrust ; and even with my superior strength and skill I own that it required all my quickness of foot and wrist and eye to oppose without endangering my fair antagonist. I think I would have laid down my ambition in this war if I could but have induced her to cease her unmaidenly attack. I began to feel a deep sense of mortification over the unmanly pastime which she forced me to maintain, when I heard David Potton, whose rage had been swelling all through our combat, cry out :

“Give the devil's cat your point, Captain. Shall I do it for you ?”

“Not on your life !” I shouted.

But I was too late. The Scoutmaster stepped to my side and I saw his sword descending on the beautiful brown head of the enraged woman. It called for all my quickness to catch his blade on my own point with a parry that disarmed him ; and, as I turned aside to make this manœuvre, the young girl thrust at me with triumphant fury and passed her sword through my left arm.

My men gave a cry of wrath and her father and brother stepped to her side to protect her. It would have gone ill with the men-at-arms and the household of Sir Patrick Dillon had I for one moment lost my self-command. As it was it required all my authority to control the revengeful spirit of my troopers, who were following David Potton in an attempt to put to the sword those who stood against us ; and they had even brought halters to hang the two priests. When I had succeeded in restoring the discipline which my own mishap had dissipated, I turned again to face Sir Patrick, and I saw that at that instant, and not until

then, Catherine had discovered that she had wounded me while I was in the act of saving her life. All the rage which had kindled her face into such a flame of passion died away, and there was now a look of deep sorrow and contrition in her brown eyes. She looked at me for a moment with an uncertain glance, then burst into a flood of tears, and saying, "I hate you," she fled into the house.

I was holding my right hand tightly over my wounded arm, endeavouring to stay the blood which was flowing all too fast. Scoutmaster Potton attempted to bind up my arm, but I felt an unaccountable sense of shame in displaying my injury to my men, and so I sternly told him it was a trifle, and bade him secure the house and its occupants. Lieutenant Willoughby now appeared, and, in a short time, he invested our troopers in the house and made prisoners of all its people. When the attention of the men was diverted from myself I passed into a large room to the right of the entrance to look for a lint and bandage for my bleeding arm. As I entered this apartment and laid my iron hat on a table, I felt a faint and dizzy sensation come suddenly over me; and then, through what seemed to be an ever-increasing haze, I beheld Catherine weeping.

"Madam," I said, holding tightly to a chair, "will you—a bandage—bind up—my arm—I am—very ill, I think."

I never before wanted to cry so like a hurt child. I saw Catherine advance to my side. But just as I was wondering what made both the beautiful girl and the room itself fly round with a terrible velocity, I felt her two hands grasp me by the shoulders. Then I fell to the floor dead to all sensation.



CHAPTER IV

FOES OUTRIGHT

WHEN I recovered my senses it was past nine o'clock, candles were lit in the room, and both Scoutmaster Potton and Lieutenant Willoughby were beside the bed on which I lay. They had stripped off my sword, cuirass, and boots, and when I gave a quick glance at my wounded arm I saw that it was neatly and tightly bandaged in a way that only a woman could accomplish. My faithful officers had ministered to me with great devotion, and a look of extreme satisfaction filled their faces when I smiled and asked them the hour.

The Lieutenant went to the door and I heard a woman's voice ask,—I was sure it was Catherine's :

"Is your Captain awake?"

His response I did not hear, but soon he passed out his hand and received a bowl of smoking broth which he brought me to eat. When I had consumed it I felt my strength restored, and, rising from the couch, sat myself down in a great chair.

The storm which we had seen gathering during our march had broken out of the heavens with unexampled violence, and the rain descended upon the house in a great flood. The lightning split upon the rolling waves

far out to sea, and the crashing thunder seemed to shake the earth with its eternal booming.

In the midst of all the noise of the storm I heard the voice of the Scoutmaster, saying :

"The Lord reigneth. Clouds and darkness are round about Him. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world : the earth saw and trembled. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols. For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth : Thou art exalted far above all gods. He preserveth the souls of His saints ; He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

"What disposition have you made of our men?" I asked.

"They are well disposed," answered Lieutenant Willoughby, "except the sentries, who will have an ill time of it in this fearful night. Lieutenant Haddon is on watch. Our men are quartered in the two wings of this house,—some ninety of them. They have had supper and are enjoying their pipes. The horses are all under shelter in the stables and the sheds thereabouts. Ten men do guard duty on the wall and at the gate."

"And Sir Patrick's household?" I asked.

"All prisoners," answered Willoughby. "Sir Patrick and his son are in separate rooms under guard. The servants are all in strict watch. Only the young lady is free, and the Scoutmaster has told her that she is under surveillance. For myself, I have not yet seen her except

now in the darkness of the hall. I knew nothing of the Devil's dance she gave you this afternoon until an hour after you came in the house. Too tender hearted are you, my Captain, to brook the evil affronts of these people with so much forbearance."

"They have much on their side to resent, Willoughby. Have Sir Patrick and his family had necessary food?"

"Everything, Captain. Their own servants attend them without restriction."

"It is well; I would not use them ill so long as it be not necessary."

"There would have been no Sir Patrick nor any Papist here to-night," said the Scoutmaster, "if I had had my way."

"Then it is well for them that you had it not," I answered, laughing. "Do you think the Prince's ship will venture out of harbour in this tempest to send his message ashore?"

"That depends on the Prince," answered the Scoutmaster. "If his ship was already at sea when the storm broke he will come here to-night. If he was in safe harbour farther north, as I believe he was, he will stay there for another twenty-four hours, or he is not the good sailor we have heard him to be."

"I will take a turn through the house and grounds," said I, rising a little unsteadily, "and presently rejoin you."

"Nay, good Captain!" protested the Lieutenant and the Scoutmaster in a breath.

"Oh, I am all right," I replied. "I will see the men ere they all sleep or they may worry about my condition. What is the word?"

"Naseby."

As he spoke the word I thought I heard the rustling of a woman's dress. Could anyone be listening?

I passed out into the hall and saw Lieutenant Haddon near the door.

"God bless you, Captain," said he, rejoiced to see me out.

"God bless you, Lieutenant," I returned. "It is a bad night. Where is Sir Patrick?"

"In the room to the rear of yours, with a sentry under the sheltered window without, and Willis Fenton at his door."

"And his son?"

"Across the hall from yours, in the front room, with sentries at window and door in like manner."

"His room looks out on the sea like mine?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Let them both be well guarded."

"Yes, Captain."

I passed down the hall looking into each room, the doors of all being wide open. The house was furnished with elegance and taste, and, as I am not fond of wanton rudeness, even to an enemy, I was glad that its principal chambers and the spacious apartments that had been intended for the use of the family had not been billeted by my men. As I proceeded I came into the right wing of the house and there found some fifty of my troopers, already much at home and mostly asleep. I received a hearty greeting there, and Richard Trevor asked me if I was much hurt.

"A bare scratch," I said; "an accidental touch. Good-night, boys."

I opened a door and passed out into the howling tempest. Tom Bufter instantly halted me, and by a flash of

lightning I saw his gun levelled at my breast. "Naseby," I said ; and crossed the open court as quickly as I could to the stables. Three men were there to guard the horses, to whom I made myself known. My own horse Dick neighed when he heard my voice, and I stroked his nose as I passed on. Inside a large stall stood Bess, and, as I thought of her fair owner, I told my men to see that the beast had good feed and good measure. Going into the left wing of the house I found the servants of Carberry Hall in the various rooms, all under guard. Upstairs I came on Corporal Wilton standing before a locked door, very angry.

"What is within, Reuben ?" I asked.

"The two priests are within, I think," he answered "but they will give no response to my knock."

"You show them too much courtesy," I said. "There shall be no locked doors here save those that we ourselves lock. Within !" I cried, pounding on the door with my sword until the house rang with it. "Open the door quickly, or——" but my noisy summons had brought the two priests to the door, who humbly inquired if they could be of service.

"Shall I knock them on the head, Captain ?" asked the Corporal. "Just look at what is behind them !" But innocently enough, there was nothing back of them but an altar with lighted candles.

The short priest fell on his knees in abject terror at these words and murmured a prayer over his beads. The other stood with a certain pride of courage which always commands respect.

"Do them no harm," I said to Wilton ; and then, looking sternly at the priests, I demanded : "What do you here with locked doors ?"

"We do but pray before the altar, good Captain," cried the short priest, still on his knees.

"Then pray with the door open henceforth," I replied. "No harm to them, Wilton," I said again to the Corporal, who was itching to give them the butt of his gun. "Quarrel not with any man because he square not with you in matters of religion. We are here to secure peace within the Commonwealth of England;—not to do wanton murder."

When I returned to the front hall I passed Lieutenant Haddon and went out into the night again and down the soaking lawn to the gate. Again I gave the word and discovered myself to the two sentries; and as I turned to retrace my steps in some haste to the house, I heard one of them foolishly say: "There is no better Captain in the army;"—to which the other replied, "He will go the full length of every hardship with us always."

When I came again into the house, dripping wet, I took a turn up and down the hall, and looking into a room two doors below mine, on the opposite side, I beheld Catherine on her knees saying her beads before a candle, with her maid, Nora, asleep beside her on a chair. I commanded Lieutenant Haddon to see that no slight was put upon the lady, and was about to rejoin my two officers, when I heard Catherine's deep, rich voice:

"Captain Marmaduke."

She stood framed in the doorway,—as beauteous a picture as any that Mr. Van Dyke has ever painted on his canvas. She was dressed in a gown of gay taffeta, which, while it was not red, had yet a slashing of red that bravely set off her brown face and head. A white lace scarf was wrapped round her neck, its two ends being held in her hands as she spoke to me.

I was at her side in an instant.

"Captain Marmaduke," she said, looking straight into my eyes with those glowing brown ones of hers, "I am very sorry that I wounded you this afternoon while you were in the act of saving my life."

"It was a perfectly proper combat," I answered, knowing well in my heart that it was not.

"I did not know that a Puritan could be polite at the expense of his conscience," she said, showing her teeth in a distant smile. "I would cheerfully have passed my sword through your heart if I could have done so in a fair fight. Nay, Captain Marmaduke, look not so horrified nor think me a brazen woman. I was intended to be a man, but God has encased my soul in a woman's frame. Yet no woman ever overcame the disadvantage of her sex more than I have done. My father has taught me to ride, fence, and swim against the best gentlemen in Ireland, and no man has ever yet made my swordsmanship so contemptible a thing as you did this afternoon. But I did not observe the attack which your cowardly officer made upon me. I simply saw that your attention had been diverted from me ; and I thrust, thinking it a fair advantage. I perceived soon afterwards that it was the most ungrateful act of my life, and I ask your forgiveness."

She had actually extended her hand. I reached mine to her, but so embarrassed was I that I barely touched her palm. She, however, clasped her fingers round mine in a hearty fashion, and then, dropping my hand, which fell to my side as if I had been a very lout, she asked :

"Am I forgiven ?"

"Oh, madam," said I, recovering my speech, "I have not given it a second thought. I deeply regret that war

has placed me in apparent hostility to you, and that our swords have crossed each other in combat. My duty here is against the peace of your family, of course, but if I can serve you personally, at any moment, you have but to command me in order to make me most happy."

When I spoke of my errand against her family her face clouded, and she said :

"I have no woman's disposition to smile at so fair a speech. Enemies we are, Captain Marmaduke, and I warn you that you shall find your plans in greater risk from me than from any Irish man in Carberry Hall. But first let me renew the dressing on your arm, and then we will be foes."

I protested that my arm was doing well and that it required no attention before morning, when my men would look after it. But she was insistent, and I entered her chamber after she had first called Nora awake, and at her bidding seated myself at her reading table. I observed that her dormer window gave her a plain view of the sea.

"Nora, hand me the lint," said Catherine. She unwrapped the bandage from my arm with deft fingers and I plainly saw her lip tremble when she again beheld the cut that she had made. But she applied a healing spermaceti, and then bound the wound tight until I winced with pain. The strength of her wrists and fingers, as I had already observed during the afternoon, was marvelous in a woman ; yet her touch was tender and soft.

I thanked her for her skilful attention, and reached the door. Turning, I said :

"Not foes outright, I hope ?"

"Outright and downright," she answered, with the distant smile again on her mouth.



CHAPTER V

RODERICK'S POOL

WHEN I entered my own room again, Thornton Willoughby made me partake of a repast which he and the Scoutmaster had prepared during my absence.

"It is now past midnight," said the Scoutmaster, "There is no change in the storm."

"A ship!" cried Willoughby, who was at the window. "I saw her riding the crest of a wave by that last flash."

"Think you it is Prince Rupert's ship?" I asked, looking out.

"It is of his fleet, beyond doubt," said the Scoutmaster, "though scarcely his flag-ship. But it bears his message to these Papists, I warrant."

"Aye," said I, "but surely they will not attempt to land in such a sea."

"That they will, Captain," replied the Scoutmaster. "They are even now protected from the worst of the tempest by the promontory which breaks the coast below; and as we do not know what signals have been agreed to be given them from this place, and none will therefore be given, they will venture to land in the darkness in order to find us out."

"Then we must to the coast," said I, "and receive them with welcoming swords and loud-speaking carbines. They are pirates under the laws of England, and they shall be treated as such."

A flash of lightning showed us the ship with all sail in but the mainsail. The waves were not so high nor the wind so fierce as they had been when I woke from my sleep two hours back.

"Lieutenant Willoughby," said I, "you will gather thirty of our men from the right wing of this house and bring them into the hall."

He was gone instantly. I turned to the Scoutmaster.

"We must prevent the Prince from communicating with the Irish commanders in the interior, if possible," I said. "If this message is intended for Lord Castlehaven or for Owen Roe O'Neil, it will give them the intentions of young Charles Stuart himself in this rebellion. If my surmise is correct, David, we can do no greater service to the English Parliament than to intercept this message."

"It is a good game," answered the Scoutmaster. "There,—they have anchored,—they lower a boat!"

"We must away," I cried, feeling the thrill in my blood which always came with an adventure, and, I will own, for the first time that night forgetting the pain of my wound.

We passed into the hall, and I threw open the door of Sir Patrick Dillon's chamber. He was asleep in bed, and my sentry was visible outside his window. In the same manner I looked in upon his son, Terence, who was likewise on his couch in seeming sleep. When I came to Catherine's door, it was open, and Nora stood with her face to the window, looking out.

"Where is your mistress?" I demanded.

"Where it pleases her to be, and that is where you may not follow her," she answered, saucily.

"Shut up, you popish brat," cried the Scoutmaster.

"Will the men never come?" I asked.

"Coming now, sir," answered Potton; and the Lieutenant marched before me with my thirty troopers.

I placed Lieutenant Haddon in charge of Carberry Hall, and set off with my party across the lawn. When we reached the gate, I asked the guard what he had seen.

"Yonder ship," he replied, "with the boat which is even now touching the shore, and your messenger who passed out two minutes ago."

"My messenger?" I cried.

"Yes, Captain, a young fellow not of our troop, smartly dressed in boots, doublet, hat, and sword, who gave me the word, 'Naseby,' and this, your ring."

He handed me the ring which I had worn on my finger up to the moment when my arm had been dressed the second time. Had *she* slipped it off while she dressed my wound? If so, it must have been done at the very moment when she was wrapping my arm tight, and when the pain hurt.

"A trick," I cried. "But come:—quick step, double time, march!"

We heard the grating of a boat on the stony beach below, a shout of challenge from a man in charge of the crew,—a mighty man with a black beard,—an answer from a solitary figure on shore, and then there was silence except for the clatter of our feet as we hurried down the incline to the sea. The vivid lightning showed us the group in consultation. We could see the figure of the

man on shore explaining his wishes by gestures. As we drew nearer six men sprang out of the boat, while a seventh pushed it out from the shore and put back for the ship.

I threw out my men in a single line to the water's edge. A somewhat steep bluff on their other side seemed to cut off the pirates' escape.

"Surrender!" I cried.

"Quick," said the man who was acting as their guide; "follow me—to Roderick's Pool."

I was now within six paces of him. A flash,—and I could swear that he was Terence Dillon. He sprang up the side of the bluff like a deer, and the six pirates pressed after him.

"Follow them, men!" I cried. "Take them alive if you can, for the halter's sake."

My men were at my side and we soon reached the level. Here we beheld a large pool of water completely walled off from the sea and apparently very deep. We surrounded the sailors on three sides. The pool was in front of them. They turned upon us defiantly. With my sword drawn and with Willoughby and the Scoutmaster beside me, I advanced. A flash showed us the leader with the black beard.

"Oh, God!" yelled the Scoutmaster, "it is Black Murtagh!"

He sprang forward and in another moment would have had the giant by the throat. But in that same instant Black Murtagh recognised Potton.

"You have found your clothes, have you, Saxon devil?" roared Black Murtagh, and, turning quickly around, with a mocking laugh, he sprang far out into the pool, every man of his party following his strange leap

except the one I took for Terence Dillon. A crash of thunder seemed to tear the earth's vitals ; the land, and sea, and sky were illuminated by the flashing light. The six pirates swam in a broken, turbulent line across the surface of the pool, looking like a shoal of dolphins. When they reached the other side they sank with one accord. I gave the word to fire, but after long waiting they came not to the surface. Scoutmaster Potton, his face filled with the deadly insanity of an unsatisfied revenge, stood with his eyes on the water, transfixed.

Lieutenant Willoughby saluted me. He was standing beside the young man who had led Black Murtagh's band up the hillside.

"A rope for this gay bird, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered, "but not to-night. In the morning we will start him after these fellows by another route."

"But, Captain Marmaduke," said the prisoner, with a jaunty air, and throwing aside his sword and belt ; "since your amiable designs on my life are not to be executed until morning, let me now wish you a good-night."

So saying he sprang into the pool ten feet below him, feet first, and when he came to the top, he, too, swam lustily across its surface, and sank at the farther edge. We looked on in wonder and awe ; but he rose no more.

At my command the men formed ranks and we marched back to the Hall ;—all but the baffled Scoutmaster, who still stood looking into the pool whence his enemy had disappeared.

I walked straight to the door of Terence Dillon's chamber. A trooper stood on guard who told me that no one had passed in or out. I pushed the door open and saw

a sentinel at the window, alert as when I had left him.
On the bed was Terence Dillon, sound asleep.

The guide who had plunged into Roderick's Pool after the six pirates, doubtless choosing a wet death to the hanging I had unwittingly promised her, was Catherine Dillon !





CHAPTER VI

THE PASSING OF SIR PATRICK

AFTER snatching three hours of sleep from the fag-end of the night, I arose to see the golden sun climbing out of the eastern sea. The storm had ceased, and as soon as the growing dawn permitted it I looked for the Prince's ship, but it was gone.

I took a turn about Carberry Hall, and, finding everything as it should be, returned to the apartment I had chosen for my own, and wrote a brief account of our adventures to General Ireton. In my despatch I expressed regret at the failure to intercept the Prince's messenger, but, knowing the General to be a fair man, I described the unexpected plunge of the entire party into the waters of Roderick's Pool, after my men had practically captured them, in such detail as would, I felt sure, relieve me from censure. I promised that my courier would deliver the black horse, Bess, to the General, for the use of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, simultaneously with this report (when I wrote this I felt a potent sorrow for Bess's lost mistress); and I asked the General to inform me of his wishes in regard to my further tenure of Carberry Hall.

I had just closed my letter when I heard a great out-

cry in the yard, and running out came upon Scoutmaster Potton and Sir Patrick Dillon, hard at it with their swords. I asked Willis Fenton the cause of the quarrel, and he told me Sir Patrick had stolen from his chamber and attempted to mount Bess and ride away. When the Scoutmaster intercepted him the Irish knight, losing all control of himself, began the attack without fair warning.

"But look!" cried Willis, even as I advanced to beat down their blades; "the Scoutmaster hath repaid him."

And so it was. The two men were of the same age, but the Scoutmaster was the better swordsman, and he had parried a vicious thrust from Sir Patrick and given the Irishman his point through the lungs.

Sir Patrick fell to the ground with screaming curses on his lips.

"English cur!" he yelled. "A priest,—quick, a priest. Curse you all—a priest, I say—fiend, may the eternal fires of perdition consume you by inches. A priest, a priest!"

No Roundhead in that troop would have obeyed any Papist's bidding to go for a priest, no matter how dire his extremity. And so I went myself, and bade the two priests come at once to their master. They ran as fast as they could, and even then they nearly came too late. The cursing was growing fainter, and it stopped altogether at a mournful word of authority from the tall priest. I made my men fall back, although I could not prevent their curious gazes at a scene which was nearly unknown in England. The priests strangely enough restored the wounded man to a peaceful mind, which is a blissful state for any man to die in. Sir Patrick then asked for his son, who was quickly sent to him by my

order. To Terence he gave secret directions which no Englishman tried to hear. The short priest had bound up his wound, but he was failing fast. He looked around, and I thought for a moment he would have given us a parting curse ; but the tall priest kept the crucifix straight before his eyes and never ceased his pious exhortations ; while the short priest muttered Latin prayers. And so the soul of Sir Patrick passed away, and I sincerely hope it went to Heaven.

Young Terence,—the master, now, of Carberry Hall,—tried to hide his grief, which, indeed, was well nigh smothered in his rage. But when I saw him look fiercely around among my men and play with the handle of his sword, I beckoned the tall priest to come to me.

“ Priest,” said I ; “ I am sorry for what has occurred, but it was an act of war, in fair fight, and the provocation came from Sir Patrick himself. Counsel this young man, therefore, to hold his peace, for all is against him here, and any attempt on his part to secure revenge will force me to take measures with him which I would gladly avoid.”

“ I will obey you, sir,” he said, making me a low bow ; and he returned to Terence whom he soon soothed into quietude with the manner mixed of authority and kindness that had just been so efficacious with the lad’s father. They led Terence into the house, and the dead knight’s body was gathered up by his retainers and taken within.

“ I am sorry for this, Potton,” I said. “ You well know my aversion to wanton bloodshed.”

“ His death is on his own head,” answered the Scout-master, sternly. “ Besides, what matters one Papist the less in Ireland ? ”

After I had added a postscript to my despatch concerning the death of Sir Patrick Dillon, I instructed the Scoutmaster if he was not hurt to take two men and ride at once to the camp below with my letter and the horse for General Ireton. With the loyal obedience which marked his service always, he expressed his ready willingness to do so. As breakfast had been already served to all but myself, he called his men together, and giving Bess's rein to Private Edward Maxwell, he set off with the little band for the English camp, ten miles away.

As they disappeared in the wood beyond the open plain which surrounded Carberry Hall, I entered the house and, joining Willoughby and Haddon at table, began my breakfast with a hearty appetite. Rob Cumber, our troop cook, had prepared some eggs and smoking-hot bacon, some bread and toasted cheese, and a stone pot of beer, all of which we put away with the soldier's zest. Our conversation was all upon the strange adventure of Terence Dillon's sister at the pool, which held us in amusement. When we had finished, I inquired after the two priests, and Willoughby told me that they were in the chapel on the second floor at the head of the great staircase. Going thither I found that they had already prepared the body of Sir Patrick Dillon for burial, and it was now resting on a couch, all but the face being covered by a military cloak. Young Terence knelt beside it, saying many prayers with a grief-stricken face. There were four huge silver candlesticks with burning candles at the head and feet of the corpse; and at the two extremities of the body stood the priests, reading their prayers in Latin. A glance round the room showed me an altar on which were many lighted candles, while in front of a small box in the centre of the altar

where they kept their sacrament a lamp burned perpetually. At either side of the altar were two marble statues, beautifully carved, one being the figure of our Saviour and the other that of Mary His blessed mother. The windows were of rich stained glass ; the ceiling was panelled, and the walls were wainscotted with ancient oak.

When I could catch the eye of the tall priest,—who called himself Father Terhune,—I beckoned him to my side.

“What are your plans for the burial of Sir Patrick's body ?” I asked.

“We will bury him in the vault near the wall at the rear of the house,” he answered, in his deep, impressive voice. “His servants are even now making the coffin, and he will be laid to rest with his fathers to-morrow morning. It would not be done with so much precipitancy if we were free men here ;—but then, if we were free men, it would not have to be done at all.” At these words there was no abatement of his habitual manner of respect.

I started to walk down-stairs, and the priest followed me. We walked in silence until we entered the banqueting hall on the first floor, which corresponded in size to the chapel immediately above us. He seemed desirous of continuing the conversation, and I sat down at the main table and motioned him to a seat beside me.

“Has your arm been dressed this morning ?” he asked.

I felt a blush in my cheeks. I had been wounded before, but never was I so conscious of a scar.

“No.”

“I have some skill. I would like to dress it for you.”

"You are very kind."

He walked away, but soon returned with laver and towel, lint and bandage, and an emollient ointment. Seating himself beside me, he removed the bandage and looked carefully at the wound.

"A clean, straight thrust," he said. "It went clear to the bone. But it is doing well. You feel a sore-ness?"

"Yes, and the arm is somewhat stiff."

"It will heal in two days. But your arm must be dressed twice each day, or there might be ugly results." He was washing my wound. "You are a Puritan, Captain Marmaduke?"

"Not as you would understand the word," I answered. "I and my family are of the Episcopal Church, and, in a large sense, we are Puritans, too."

"I did not know that the Episcopalians had taken sides against your King."

"Many of them did, who feared that Archbishop Laud was taking us over bodily to Rome. Of such were my family."

"And why not to Rome?" he asked, rubbing the soothing ointment into the lips of the cut.

"That is a question, priest," I answered, laughing, "that is as big as this war which we have entered upon. But briefly, and speaking wholly for myself, I would not surrender myself to Rome, when there is a much straighter and shorter way between my mouth and the divine ear of God Almighty."

"But what becomes of the ignorant under such doctrines?" he asked. "How are they to learn this straight and short way of yours? How are the sheep to go without the shepherd?"

"In England," I said, "every good Englishman is for Christ, and Christ for us all."

"You have abolished churches there?"

"No. On the contrary, churches have multiplied there. But our churches have no divine power in and for themselves. A church is but the aggregate expression of its individual membership."

This was blasphemy in the priest's ear. He gave the bandage a tight pull.

"And that is the religion you would introduce into Ireland?" he asked, suppressing a scorn which I knew he felt."

"We meddle not with Ireland's religion if we can but restore peace," I answered.

"Then let our prayers unite for peace," he said. "Your arm is dressed, Captain Marmaduke."

"I am beholden to you for your kindness," I said. "I shall not forget it."

He bowed, and was gone.

The rain of the preceding night had cooled the air, and I walked out through the gate to enjoy the delightful countryside. Almost without design I found my footsteps wending down the road to Roderick's Pool. Reaching the green bank whence that fearful plunge had been taken the night before, I threw myself down on the turf and gazed into the water.

"So young, so beautiful, so full of courage," I said, my mind filled with the image of the maiden who had charmed my soul with the fire and flash of her life. "How impetuous her career, how melancholy her death!"

The summer leaves had fallen upon the surface of the pool. I had selected a spot under which my imag-

ination pictured the dark secret of Catherine's plunge, when my attention was arrested by the sound of a horse galloping down the road from the English camp. I sprang to my feet, and stood rooted with astonishment to behold Bess approaching me covered with foam, while on her back was a rider who might have been Terence Dillon had I not known that Terence was at that moment in prayer beside his father's corpse in the chapel, and my prisoner.

The bold rider sprang to the ground, and I saw a face full of wrathful agony.

"It is impossible!" I exclaimed.

"Nay, I am Catherine Dillon, and this is my horse Bess. Captain Marmaduke, is it true that you have slain my father?"

I could not speak for a moment, so overcome was I by the paralysis of surprise.

"If you have lost your tongue and will not answer my demand, I shall take quick judgment on you." Her sword was out in an instant, and I must own that it had the effect to restore my speech. I was going to address her as Madame, but her warlike dress and attitude forbade the effeminate title.

"Your father is slain," I said, "but not by me."

There was a burst of sorrow that overwhelmed her. She dropped her sword upon the ground and sank her head in the black mane of her horse, giving her soul away to grief. I picked up the blade and pushed it home into its scabbard, and as I came into involuntary contact with her, I longed to soothe her troubled spirit. But I stood off a pace or two with folded arms, and waited.

"Oh, how could you kill him?" she cried. "And

he your prisoner, too. Cruel Saxon ! How could you do it ? ”

Again she hid the passion of her face in the horse's mane. I made no answer.

“ To kill him when he was your prisoner ! In his own house, too ! ” she said. “ I wonder what my brother has been about ! Had I been here—oh, how could you do it ! ” And the poor girl gave way once more to her grief.

After an interval, when she seemed to be regaining a partial composure, she suddenly demanded :

“ Why don't you answer me ? ”

“ Madam,”—her tears had brought back her womanhood to me,—“ Madam,” I said, “ he was slain in fair fight by one of my officers.”

“ By whom ? ” she asked, fiercely.

“ By my Scoutmaster, David Potton.”

“ Then hear my oath, Captain Marmaduke,” she cried, flashing her eyes full upon me. “ I swear, by the Blessed Virgin, that I will take that man's life with my own hand if God spares him until we meet face to face ! ”

She was beautiful in her wrath, but terrible. I shuddered to behold the spirit of revenge in this young girl. I felt that I would pluck her from the fire.

“ It was an act of war,” I said. “ The attack came from your father. Let it be revenged if you will, but leave killing to men. Such deeds are not for the participation of women.”

There was a mingling of reproof and authority in my voice that caused her to look at me in surprise. I saw her make a motion to mount her horse, and I placed my hand before her that she might step upon it to reach

her seat. But without heeding me she sprang lightly into her man's saddle in a man's way, and paced her steed slowly towards the house. I followed her on foot through the gate, and when we reached the door of the mansion she dropped gracefully to the ground and walked towards the chapel. I ascended the stairs behind her, and, when she had gone nearly to the top, she turned and said :

“A word of warning, Captain Marmaduke. Your messenger was intercepted this morning by Lord Kilmac, a renegade Irish chieftain, and three hundred mounted men, and one of your followers was killed. I recovered my horse and rode ahead to learn if what one of the prisoners told me was true concerning my father's death. You will be attacked by Lord Kilmac inside of one hour. Take heed to yourself, for he is a merciless and cruel foe beyond any you have ever met. He professes friendship for my family, but he is a traitor to Ireland, and I will accept his aid only in so far as it will release me from your custody.”

She sped into the chapel, and I heard a burst of agony as she threw herself on her father's dead body.

But there was serious business before me, and in two minutes I had found my trumpeter, William Cozens, who straightway called my troop to arms in the manor-yard.





CHAPTER VII

THE ATTACK ON CARBERRY HALL

MY men quickly fell in line on the greensward in front of the house, and I put them through the evolutions of the foot drill. I saw that each man was properly arrayed, inspected their pieces with great care, and ordered some pikes brought from the house, which were placed near the wall for use at close quarters. I then despatched the men to prepare their horses for action, putting the saddle myself on Dick, who seemed glad with the prospect of work. I would have sent a courier to General Ireton and asked for a few more men, but it would consume six hours before help could reach me under such a call, and I assumed that the end of this venture would come in half that time. Moreover, as the odds were only about three to one, and my troop was thus far unbeaten, I felt a soldier's pride in standing the attack alone. My defensive position behind the walls of Carberry Hall gave me an advantage that was equal to an additional troop if the fight were to have been on open ground ; and if Catherine had correctly reported the enemy in her statement that he numbered three hundred, I felt that I could meet him with my ninety-seven men without undue risk of disaster.

The turf had been sloped against the wall on the inside so that it stood but five feet high to us, as against eight feet on the outside. This was an excellent arrangement, as my men, by standing upright on this artificial rise, could easily fire their pieces over the wall, and retire behind it for reloading. The Irishry, on the contrary, could only mount it from ladders, or from their horses' backs, as we had done the day before, while they would be exposed to our fire throughout their attack.

Leaving a guard over the horses, I placed forty men at the wall under Lieutenant Willoughby, while Haddon drew up four squads of ten men each, and stood at arms on the centre of the lawn. I then assembled the entire body of the inhabitants of Carberry Hall, including the Irish men-at-arms and servants, and locked them securely in the banqueting hall, with two sentinels at the window outside under instructions to slay the first man who attempted to leave the apartment by door or window. Ascending the great stairway, I entered the chapel, where Terence Dillon and his sister Catherine, together with the two priests, were still at their office of devotion over the corpse of Sir Patrick.

"Pardon me," I said, "for this intrusion, but I am expecting an attack from Lord Kilmac and the Irish soldiers under him, and I have placed the natives of this place in close confinement under guard in the banqueting hall beneath. You who are here—you, Mr. Dillon, these priests, and the lady, must give me your parole not to leave the chapel, nor to take action with our enemies, or my duty will compel me to confine you with the rest below. Quick, what do you say?"

"On parole," answered Terence.

"And you, priests?" I said.

"On parole," they replied.

I hesitated a moment. And then :

"And you, madam?"

But never a word would she speak. She was telling her rosary, and would not look up. I professed to ignore her, and said :

"The violation of this parole will be met with death under the usage of war."

Hearing a shot from the wall, which was the signal I had ordered to be given at the first appearance of danger, I ran down the stairs and sprang upon my horse. Spurring him across the lawn I peered through the gate and saw a body of fierce and uncouth horsemen in the wood across the open space, three hundred yards away. Willoughby was in high spirits at the prospect of a fight, and he pressed eagerly to my side.

"Of what party are they?" I asked.

"I have made inquiries among the Irishry here," he replied, "and they tell me Lord Kilmac is a rebel against both O'Neill and Ormond. He lives not far from here, and goes out from his castle against all foes, whether English or Irish. A very devil, they say, for cruelty and blood, who but recently hath slain his own wife."

"It were a good thing, then, to rid the earth of such a miscreant."

An Irish trumpeter rode forward, and, when he came within fifty paces of the gate, we commanded him to halt. He did so, and, after sounding a note, he cried :

"Who commands here?"

Throwing my bridle to Richard Trevor I mounted the wall.

"I, Captain John Marmaduke, hold this place for the English Parliament."

"And I," shouted the trumpeter, "on behalf of Lord Kilmac, of Ballyrae, do hereby summon you to instantly surrender, failing which you will receive no quarter."

"I know but one who commands in Ireland for the Parliament of England," I answered. "Even the Lord General Cromwell. Besides, I am told that Lord Kilmac is a renegade against his own people. This you will say to him, and tell him, furthermore, that I refuse to surrender."

He rode swiftly back to the wood, and I saw him telling his message to an officer who was at the head of the Irishry.

After a short parley among themselves the Irish blew a blast on their bugle, and, with ferocious shoutings, moved forward out of the wood. As they came into sight I estimated that there were a full three hundred but not more. Calling to Haddon to look well after the west wall, and giving a like warning to Willoughby on the east wall, I stood where the Irish trumpeter had left me, watching their advance.

When they had come within one hundred yards of the gate, riding twenty abreast, they split down the centre and set out at a full gallop, one half going to the side of the east wall, and the other to the west, but taking a wide circle, so that they still kept one hundred yards beyond our carbines. Reaching the centre of the wall on each side, they halted, and, ceasing their noise for a time, brought their carbines into position. As I would naturally be the first target for their marksmen, I now retired from the wall, having observed them long enough to note that they lacked continuity in their military movements, and that there was no such perfect response to orders among them as that for which our English soldiers were famous.

I heard the word, "Fire !" given, but, while a few pieces were discharged, there was no fusillade, for the simple reason that, as my men had sunk behind the wall, there were no heads to shoot at. They saw that an assault would be necessary, and, on a signal from the bugler, they rode towards us on both sides with renewed clamour. When they had decreased the distance one half, my men stood up and fired at the advancing columns, making fourteen or fifteen empty saddles. The enemy fired back, but the motion of their horses spoilt their aim, and no harm was done. My men reloaded and let them have it again right under the walls, doing a worse execution than before, although, as I was now with Haddon on the west side, I could not see what Willoughby was doing on the other side. We gave them a third round, and a fourth, and a fifth, and all the time they were trying to get on the wall, neglecting to keep a rearguard to do their firing, which oversight I seized to our full advantage. As fast as their front men attempted to mount the wall from the unsteady foothold of their saddles, we gave them a barking which laid them low for all time. With sword in hand I stood on the wall, cheering my men to stand fast and keep up their firing ; and Elijah Haddon did all that a brave officer could do to win the day. More than once I saw him strike his sword on the head of a daring besieger who fell back with a cracked skull. The only assailant who got upon the rampart and stood upright was a man of gigantic stature, with a black beard, whose repulsive face seemed strangely familiar to me.

"Over the wall !" he cried, waving his carbine aloft. "They are but a handful of curs. Buddagh Sassenach ! Over and at them !"

But two of my men struck full at his breast piece with their pikes and pushed him back upon his horse, whence he nearly fell to the ground, cursing us in the impotency of his rage.

The assault was ill-planned and it failed miserably. A retreat was sounded, and the assailants, making much less noise, rode back to the wood, a hundred men short. My whole troop sprang upon the wall and with a wild cheer gave them a parting volley. I ran over to the east side and found that Lieutenant Willoughby's experience there had been very similar to my own. He told me that Lord Kilmac had led the attack there in person, as he had heard one of the soldiers pronounce his name, but that they had failed because of the height of the wall and through their neglect to keep a firing platoon in the rear of the charging column. My men pressed round me and many of them shook my hands in the glad effervescence of victory. We hugged ourselves for joy, for while a hundred men had bit the dust beyond the wall, not one of ours had suffered serious hurt. But a bugle blast from the wood told us that it was not yet all over, and as I got my men back into their places, I learned to my dismay that our powder was near spent, and that, after a round or two more, we would have to depend upon our swords.

While I stood chafing for a moment in this disquieting predicament, but endeavouring to comfort myself in the reflection that the order under which we had left the English camp had not contemplated the siege whereby the ammunition of our light marching order had been expended, my attention was suddenly attracted to the actions of our enemy at the edge of the wood. The black-bearded giant had ridden to the front of the Irish

column and was waving a white signal on the point of his pike in the direction of the manor-house. Turning round I beheld Catherine waving a like signal from the window of the chapel. Three times up and down it went, and, after a brief intermission, the signal was given twice again ; and then a shot from one of my watchful troopers struck the staff close to her hand and splintered it, at which she withdrew into the embrasure.

I flung myself off my horse, and, entering the house, leaped up the stairs in a high state of anger. Ere I reached the top, Catherine came out upon the landing with a contemptuous smile on her face, and stood silent before me.

"What have you to say, madam, to this treachery ?" I cried. "Do you not know that your life was duly forfeited to yonder trooper, and that his bullet was aimed at your heart ?"

"I am sorry that your execution of military justice rests upon such poor marksmen, Captain Marmaduke," she answered. "As it is, he has sent a splinter into my hand which I hope to pay him for, ere this adventure be over." Her pouting lip trembled as she looked at her hand, which had a speck of blood on it. "As to your charge of treachery, tell me, sir, whether it is treachery for a woman to seek the rescue of her home from the invader ?"

"It is treachery for anyone to violate a parole of honour," I said.

"I gave you no parole, Captain Marmaduke," she replied. She was looking at her hand, and, stepping forward, I seized it not ungently, and withdrew the splinter from its ruddy flesh. She made no resistance to the action, but wiped away with her handkerchief the drop of blood which followed my operation.

"You are too careless of your life," I said. "These matters are not for women. Will you tell me why you passed the signal to the Irish soldiers?"

"You doubtless do not expect me to answer your question," she said, smiling, "but I will do so. My signal told them that your powder is spent, and counselled a renewal of the attack."

My blood boiled at this confession.

"I wonder that I have not placed you in close confinement ere this," I said.

"I wonder at it somewhat myself," she replied, "for I have already given you fair warning that I will circumvent you if I can. Let me tell you this, Captain Marmaduke. The message from Prince Rupert to Lord Castlehaven is still in my possession, and, being now your prisoner, I expect to give it to Black Murtagh this afternoon."

"Black Murtagh!" I cried. "He who plunged last night into Roderick's Pool?"

"The same," she answered, with her mocking smile. "He it was who mounted the wall to-day."

"And was it he who just now answered your signal?"

"Black Murtagh it was," she said.

"This surpasses all claims of womanhood," I cried. "Madam, I must confine you under strict military guard. Your persistence is insufferable."

"I am at your mercy, Captain Marmaduke," she answered. "But hark! Do you not hear those shots without? The attack has been resumed. Look to yourself, for your way to victory will not be so short this time, I promise you."

"Give me one chance for a fair fight," I said. "Tell me where the powder is stored in this hall. My men have searched everywhere for it, but without avail."

"I cannot arm you against my countrymen," she replied. "If there be powder here you must find it." She took a gold chain from round her neck, and, displaying a crucifix upon it, put it over my head. "If they overcome you," she said, "show them this, and they will spare your life."

"No," I said, restoring it to her kindly, "I cannot enter this conflict wearing such a badge. I will win or fall with my brave troopers. Adieu !"

There was a loud shout followed by a volley of musketry. I sprang down the stairs, sword in hand, and out into the yard. The Irish, shrieking their outlandish war-cries, were advancing on the east and west sides in two lines at each point ; and this time I observed that the rearguards were reserving their fire to support the front ranks when they should reach the wall. I ordered my men to hold their shots until it came to close quarters. In a moment the Irish soldiers were at the wall, and we gave them a hot round, emptying twenty saddles. Their return fire dropped three of my brave fellows, and then we mounted the wall, and went at them with our swords.

It was as stiff a fight for ten minutes as I had ever seen. Their front ranks made such a brave effort to gain a footing on the wall that the rear firing lines could make no effective use of their carbines for fear of killing their own men. Being on the wall we had the best of it, and we beat them off so nicely on the west side that, after sticking my sword through one fellow's throat, I found time to breathe, and turned to see how it fared with Willoughby across the lawn. He was doing well in the main, but his line was suddenly broken near the gate, and I saw Black Murtagh and two others leap over into the yard and run for the house. Willoughby closed

up the gap with admirable courage, throwing himself into the line, but he could give no time to the three interlopers. Glancing toward the house, I beheld Catherine waving a sealed paper to Black Murtagh.

"Hold your men stiffly to it, Haddon," I cried. "I will return soon."

I was fifty yards nearer the house than the three Irishmen, and I started for the door with a fleet foot. Catherine saw me coming, and ran up the stairs towards the chapel. But I was close upon her, and ere she knew how near I was I had seized the paper from her hand and thrust it into my boot. She turned upon me in a fury.

"Coward!" she cried. "Coward, to rob a woman!"

But as I turned to go back down the stairs, Black Murtagh and his two companions entered the door and began to ascend.

"Hah!" he cried. "So, you have put yourself in a trap. Return that paper, Englishman, or we will make dog's food of your carcass."

I stood on the landing with one foot on the first step, my sword advanced, my eye alert, and filled with a knowledge of my strength and skill which sustained me in this moment of peril. Catherine was behind me, a little to one side. If she stood neutral I feared not the combat in front.

Black Murtagh eyed me narrowly and paused.

"Give me that paper," he said, "and we will all return and fight it out on the walls."

"The paper which I have secured," I answered, "leaves my hand only to go into that of the English General."

"Curse you, then," said he, "for an obstinate villain."

The three Irishmen came up the stairs not too fast, and Black Murtagh thrust his sword at me. I parried it, and then I had their three blades in play.

"At him, Peter!" cried Black Murtagh. "Get around behind him, Rory! Here we go! At him, all three! Down with the Saxon dog!"

But I had no mind to let them in behind me. The stairway was eight feet wide, and, by shifting my position now a step to the right and now a step to the left, my good right arm made the lateral approaches much too hot for the sneaking comrades of my foe.

They pressed me hard, in spite of my vantage-point at the top of the stairs. Black Murtagh was no novice with the sword, and he tried a trick or two which kept me on my mettle. His two partners lacked skill, but they cut and thrust at me with an ugly vim which showed me the murder in their hearts. Seizing a moment when Black Murtagh had fallen back a step to avoid my thrust, I sprang suddenly to one side, and sent Peter's sword flying down the stairs. At the same time I planted my foot in Peter's breast and gave him a push that sent him head over heels to the bottom, with all sense crushed out of him. The ruse like to have cost me dear, for Rory's sword came down on my steel cap with a crash that made me reel in my tracks. But I recovered instantly, and passed my blade under his arm and through his heart to the hilt, and he rolled downward against Black Murtagh.

I thought I heard a voice behind me say, "Well done!" But I pressed in on Black Murtagh with my spirit up, and had him where he would have fallen before my steel, when my foot slipped on the wet stair in Rory's blood, and I fell beside the corpse, my sword gone I know not

where. I heard a woman's scream, I felt Black Murtagh's hand upon my throat, I saw his knife flashed out and raised above me, I thought once of my mother in Yorkshire and once of General Ireton in camp at Arklow, I nerved myself for a last resistance to death, when a tall, black-robed form advanced from the chapel door and stepping quickly downward seized the uplifted arm.

"Spare him," cried Father Terhune, "spare him for the Church ! "

I found my sword.

"Shall we have it out ? " I asked.

But Black Murtagh, with a curse on the priest's interference, sheathed his dagger, and sped out into the yard.





CHAPTER VIII

THE FIGHT ON THE PLAIN

“**Y**OU spared my life yesterday morning,” said the priest, “and I have now saved yours.”

“I am very grateful to you,” I answered, and, as the clash of arms still resounded on the wall, I passed outside and found my men at swords’ points with the enemy. Black Murtagh, followed by Peter Dingle, who had recovered from my assault, was speeding across the lawn, and succeeded in passing over the wall near the gate to his friends without attracting the attention of my troopers. Willoughby seemed to have well resisted the attack on the east side of the enclosure, but there were signs of distress on the west side where Haddon had charge. Two of my men on that side had been killed, and some three or four others were disabled by wounds. On the other hand, I observed, on mounting the wall with a cry of encouragement which instantly revived the spirit of my soldiers, that they had wrought great execution on the Irishry. We went at them now with so much resolution that the last man of them was driven over the wall ; and as we dropped back under cover to avoid their fire, a retreat was sounded for the second time, and the enemy withdrew from both sides.

Lord Kilmac had no fear this time of our carbines, as almost our last charge had been fired. So he formed his broken ranks on the open ground two hundred yards in front of the gate with great deliberation.

"Why do you fear the Saxon curs?" I heard him say. "They are without powder and are but a handful altogether. One more charge and we will cut their throats so that not a man among them will live to tell how we won our victory."

But half his command was either killed or wounded, and while one or two of his officers shouted for another charge, the private soldiers seemed to have little heart for the business.

On our side, however, the prospect was not a bright one. Five of my men had been killed in the two engagements and as many more were suffering from wounds. It was two hours after noon and we had had no food since breakfast; and, under the hard fighting, we began to fag. As many of the Irish had not been on the wall, they were not so far spent as we; and it seemed clear that if Lord Kilmac could stir his men to another assault we must surely be overtaken by the sanguinary fate which he had promised us. With our situation thus forming itself in my mind, I resolved to sally out and try the last chance of war in open fight.

Our horses were perfectly fresh, having had no work since our arrival at Carberry Hall on the previous day. I called William Cozens, and his trumpet quickly sounded to horse. My men, who saw the desperate chance which I had chosen, and inwardly approved it, were in their saddles with alacrity, having first refreshed themselves with water and a biscuit.

Leaving only the two sentinels in charge of the pris-

oners, and allowing for five killed and two sent with the ill-fated despatch under the Scoutmaster, and one man too badly wounded to take further part, I still had ninety men, all a little blown, it is true, and some hurt ; but every man there knew that it was soon to be a fight for life ; and I trusted to our valour, our better discipline, and our good, fresh horses to beat the enemy away.

I had never learned the trick of talking to my men in company beyond the shout of command when we were in action ; but they knew me so well that it never seemed necessary to explain any situation to them, as they trusted my judgment implicitly. I own that as I now looked into their resolute though weary faces I would have been glad to make them an eloquent speech. But as Willis Fenton and Richard Trevor, on my order, suddenly threw the great gates wide open, there was one there who spoke more tellingly than any orator of silver tongue, even Williams Cozens, whose trumpet thrilled every heart to the core with its martial blast, "Forward !"

We rode through the gate and got clear of the wall before the Irish chieftain knew that we had any manœuvre in hand. When we came to a halt with a good hundred yards between him and us, he scarcely knew whether we meant fight or flight. But our waving banners and the battle-form of our ranks soon told him that no craven purpose swayed us ; and he hastened his own preparation with an agitation which was far from restoring the courage of his men.

The tactics of war required the English troop, one hundred strong (though now ten short), for the action which I had in mind, to be drawn up in five ranks, giving a frontage of twenty men, with six foot space between

man and man, and six foot distance from rank to rank. That is to say, every soldier was six feet from his comrade to front, flanks, and rear: six feet being the assumed length of one horse. This was the formation which I now arranged.

Each of the five ranks bore its own name: first, leaders; second, followers-to-the-front; third, middle-men; fourth, followers-to-the-rear; fifth, bringers-up. The object of the six foot space between man and man was to enable the whole troop to turn round to flanks or rear by the simple words, "Right about turn!" or, "Left about turn!" as the case might be. Thus the open formation was indispensable for the simplest manœuvre.

But the Irish commander, instead of forming his men in this method for their easy handling, ranged them in two long ranks of seventy-five men each, the men being placed knee to knee, and the horses in the front and rear ranks standing nose to croup. I saw with delight that we were once more to profit by his ignorance of the art of war.

I gave him barely time to form his lines in this crude fashion, and then, turning to my men with honest pride and affection, I cried, "Charge!"

We swept across the open ground at full gallop, shouting our cry, "The Parliament, the Parliament!" Our banners waved and our swords flashed. The Irishman never attempted to give us his guns, but, shouting his Celtic cry, moved forward on a half-spirited trot to meet us. "Buailio!" (Strike ye!), he cried. "Li-om! Or-ra!" (Follow me! Upon them!) "Buailio! Buailio!" And meet us he did, but it was a sorry day for him. Our open formation covered his whole line and we gave

him our sabres, cut and slash, until his front rank became inextricably mixed with his rear, and his whole command massed in such a huddled confusion that we had only to pick our game to send what men of his we would to their last accounting. We sent them with a will, for our spirits were high and this was the foe who had shortly before promised to cut our throats.

I was in the heat of the action, my wounded arm giving me much pain from holding the bridle, when Black Murtagh rode full against me and struck at me with his sword. Rob Cumber caught the blow while Dick Trevor dealt the giant a rap on the head that knocked him off his horse. When my men had broken down all resistance and gone far enough in among the Irish soldiers, I called them back and formed them for another charge.

As we brought our horses into position we saw that the Irish chieftain was in a deplorable situation ; and my men gave a cheer as with one voice when they beheld his sorry plight. Twenty of his men lay dead from the late encounter, fifty stood dismounted and hurt, and the rest sat their horses in the last picture of despair. Lord Kilmac was wounded but still full of fight. Black Murtagh, assisted by Peter Dingle, was mounting his horse in a dazed way. Some of the minor officers were riding up and down the broken line, hardly knowing how to avert further ruin.

Another charge meant annihilation to our enemy, and I was unwilling now to do wanton execution on him. I called to him to surrender ; a cruel summons to one who had expected ten minutes ago to be the victor. He defied me with an execration.

"There is no hope for you," I cried.

"Try me, and find what an Irishman can do when he is pressed," he answered.

But I held my men still, giving him full time to form his defence ; when suddenly I heard the blast of a bugle in the wood behind the Irishry, and half a regiment of horse, five hundred men, rode out into the open ground, and coming to a halt, planted a banner bearing an open Bible, buff, on a black field ; while a mighty shout, "The Parliament, the Parliament !" told that they were from the English camp at Arklow.

Lord Kilmac, caught in front and rear, stood stock still.

The leader of the English reinforcements spoke a word to an officer, who put spurs to his horse, and, making a detour, rode far to the right of the Irish line alone, and came toward me at full gallop. He was a Colonel, but twenty-one years of age, with a handsome, intellectual face full of dignity and courage ; and it required no second look for me to recognise Henry Cromwell, the Lord Lieutenant's youngest son.

"Captain Marmaduke," said he, bringing his horse to a sudden stop.

My men gave him a cheer, which he acknowledged with a pleasant smile.

"General Ireton commands yonder in person, and he has sent me to inquire into your situation. I see that you have had rough work and plenty of it." His eye swept over the field and along the wall where the corpses of the Irish soldiers lay thick upon the ground. "What loss have you sustained ? Upon my life you seem nearly intact."

"I have had five men killed, Colonel Cromwell," I answered. "Two are on guard duty in yonder house, one

is there wounded, two others, with my Scoutmaster, left me this morning with a despatch for our General. All the rest of my troop are here."

"Truly a good accounting, Captain Marmaduke," he said. "The Lord has strengthened your arm and been wondrously good to you in the midst of great dangers." His gaze turned to the Irishry. "Is not this fellow sufficiently whipped? Upon my life, you have well-nigh cut him to pieces."

I told him briefly the story of the two assaults on the wall and of my charge through the gate. "I did but now demand his surrender," I said, "being averse to the needless suffusion of his blood."

"He is a brave fellow, doubtless," said Colonel Cromwell, "though he ought to be whipped for his ignorance of his profession. This field tells the story of his blunders, as of your prowess. I think he will no longer hold out; if he do, it will be a short story with him. I will summon him. But no, he is your prize, Captain Marmaduke. I beg your pardon. Do you speak to him once more."

I thanked him for his consideration. He was ever one of the most courteous of men. Riding forward a few paces, I hailed the Irish commander.

"Lord Kilmac, the troops that have just arrived in your rear are from our English camp and are commanded by General Henry Ireton. We will act together in any further operations against you. Will you now surrender?"

"What terms will you grant me?" he asked.

I turned to Colonel Cromwell.

"At mercy?" I suggested; and he nodded his approval.

"I demand your surrender at mercy," I said. This meant that he was to place himself in my hands without promise from me.

The Irishman exchanged a word with his officers ; and then, "I do yield to force at mercy," he said.

I rode back to Colonel Cromwell's side and held a brief conference with him. Then riding forward, I said :

"My Lord Kilmac, you will cause your men to lay down their arms, both their swords and carbines, and to give up their horses. You will provide burial at once for the slain ; you will then march on foot whither you will before nightfall."

"Agreed," he said, "since I can do no better. I can retain my own sword?"

"Surely," I answered. "You are a brave man; though you came against the life of my troop."

His men at once laid down their arms and gave up their horses to my troopers. They then set about digging a great pit a furlong to the rear of the back wall, and the gruesome work of burying their dead comrades began.

In the meantime, Colonel Cromwell had spurred his horse back to the English reinforcements and reported the affair to General Ireton. As soon as the Irish had left the field I rode across it and saluted my General. He received me with an expression of high regard, and asked a question or two about the fight, which I briefly answered. He then ordered his troops to hold themselves at rest on the plain, while he and Colonel Cromwell rode with me to my troop. As he came before them, my men, who loved him as did all our army, gave him a hearty cheer, which pleased him greatly.

"The Lord hath blessed you with a notable victory," he cried. "You have dealt the Irish a blow this day

which will much advance our cause. You have overcome their attack like good English hearts. The Parliament forever !”

We all responded, “The Parliament forever !” And the English on the other side took up the cry and echoed it into the wood and over the sea : “The Parliament forever !”

We rode on through the gate and into the close, my troop following us. Once inside, I ordered my men to seek refreshment and rest, and told Lieutenants Willoughby and Haddon to have our wounded looked well after. With General Ireton and Colonel Cromwell I then led the way to the house ; but when we came nigh to it a sight met my eyes which filled me with rage and shame.

The two troopers whom I had left on guard at the window in charge of the prisoners in the banqueting hall were bound fast to each other, back to back, and gagged. In front of the house were the thirty men-at-arms and men-servants of Carberry Hall who had been their captives. They were armed with pikes, and were drawn up in six rows of five men each. I instantly divined that they had overpowered the sentries by some sharp trick of another mind, and had formed for an attack on my rear during my fight with Lord Kilmac. They had learned of the unexpected arrival of General Ireton too late to disperse ; and now, being unable to cover up their design, they stood before us with the discomfiture of detection on their faces.

General Ireton halted his horse in surprise, and turned upon me with a look of inquiry.

I briefly gave him an account of the prisoners, together with my surmise as to their present situation.

"But who is the stripling at their head with his sword drawn?" he asked.

I felt the hot blood reddening my temples.

"Do you not recognise the owner of the black horse?" I answered, evasively.

"To be sure," he said. "The young man who got away from us yesterday."

But it was not that young man at all. There was a trick about the pouting mouth of the officer referred to which I had well learned by this time. Besides, there was a curving fulness at the hips, and a swell at the chest, which escaped all eyes but mine. I doubt if the prisoners themselves knew that their leader was not Terence. But I knew beyond peradventure that it was Catherine.

"See that they are all instantly secured and well guarded, Captain Marmaduke," cried General Ireton, "and we will pick out six of them to represent each row as they now stand and have them shot with their scape-grace leader on Monday morning at eight o'clock."

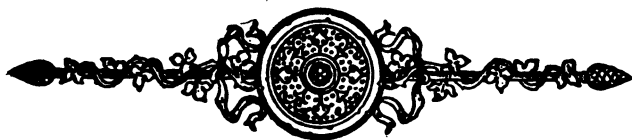
The faces of the Irish soldiers exhibited distress in varying degrees as they heard this sentence, but their young leader never altered by a shade the frowning defiance of her face.

It made me sick at heart to see the importunity with which she courted misfortune. But she had brought it on herself against the rules of war which I had carefully explained to her. I called to Corporal Wilton, who gathered his men, and, after disarming the prisoners, marched them to a guard-room with thick walls and barred windows, beside the horse-sheds.

"As for their leader," I said, severely, "you will convey—him—to the room near the great stairway inside the

house, which was last night occupied by his sister. You will place two men at the window and two at the door. Let no insolence be offered him, for he is to meet his death soon."

With a choking feeling in my throat I passed into the house with my superior officers, and ordered Rob Cumber to bring us the best meal he could prepare with such speed as his skill in cookery would permit.





CHAPTER IX

THE INTERCEPTED LETTER

WHILE we were enjoying our evening meal in the banqueting hall, I gave my superior officers a relation of the leading incidents that had befallen us since we left the camp on the previous day : without, however, referring to the part played therein by Miss Dillon. When I had finished my narration, I asked General Ireton in what manner he had been led to undertake our relief.

“It was high noon to-day,” answered the General, “when your Scoutmaster, David Potton, rode furiously into camp alone, and nearly fainting from a wound, a pistol-shot in the chest.”

“Was Potton badly wounded?” I cried, in pained surprise.

“No, not badly, when the flow of blood was stopped,” answered the General. “He insists that he will soon return to you. He informed me that you had sent him to me with a message ; that he had been stopped by the Irish force at a turn of the road, and one of his men killed and the other taken, but that he had put spurs to his horse and dashed through the ranks of the enemy, receiving a wound as he sped away. He told me the

story of Black Murtagh's plunge into Roderick's Pool together with his followers ; but he vowed that he recognised him among Lord Kilmac's men. The inference seemed clear that Black Murtagh was leading a force against you at Carberry Hall. As General Cromwell is now in command of our camp, I came hither with some of our brave fellows as quickly as our horses would bring us ; but not quick enough to assist you in the valorous whipping you gave this fierce Lord Kilmac."

The General smiled as he uttered this compliment, and I said that his arrival had been most opportune.

"Of course," said Colonel Cromwell, "Potton was unable to bring the black mare, Bess, to our camp. The poor fellow who had her halter, young Edward Maxwell, was killed, and Potton had no time to give her a further thought. Do you know what became of the horse?"

Again I felt myself blushing : a trick I had never learned until I came to Carberry Hall. I commenced an evasive reply, when the tall priest, Father Terhune, suddenly entered the room. After bowing respectfully to my associates, he said to me in a tone of marked deference :

"Captain Marmaduke, if you will be good enough to follow me, I shall take pleasure in dressing the wound in your arm."

"I hardly think it requires further attention," I answered. "It gives me no pain."

"Nay, Captain," said General Ireton, "the thing should not be neglected. If this priest has skill go you with him. Henry and I will see to the men we brought hither."

"It is well that the night is warm," said Colonel Cromwell, rising from the table, "for our men have no tents and they must sleep on the sward."

"Will you bring them within the close?" I asked.

"No," replied the General, "they will sleep at the edge of the wood, but you may assign rooms to Henry and me."

They walked out into the fading day and I followed the gaunt priest. He led me up the hall to Catherine's door, which opened to his knock, and we passed in and closed it in the faces of the two sentries.

Catherine, still arrayed in her martial habit, which I had come to detest, was lighting her candles, and was alone in the apartment, saving our intrusion.

The priest motioned me to a seat, and without a word he removed the bandage from my arm and surveyed the wound critically. Catherine came behind me and looked on with attention.

"It is doing well," said the priest. "By Monday it will be healed completely. The salve, Catherine."

She handed him the jar of ointment, which he applied to the wound. When he had wrapped a fresh cloth about my arm, he rose and proceeded to wash his hands from a silver laver on her table. Catherine paced up and down the room with a nervous step, while the priest faced me and spoke.

"Captain Marmaduke, you cannot but suspect that I am gravely concerned at the position in which the daughter of this house is placed through the events of this afternoon."

I said something half-angrily about those who fly in the face of Providence, which brought the peripatetic maiden to a full stop, and she would have replied to my remark had not the priest restrained her by a curt wave of his hand.

"There is no room for argument on that score," he

said. "But I am constrained to believe that you will interpose your influence with yonder General to obtain pardon, both for her and the men-at-arms who were arrested with her."

"How did it come that you overpowered my sentries?" I demanded, with severity.

A smile played on her lips as she again paused before me.

"It was an easy thing to do," she said. "When one of your guards went with a cup of water to the wounded soldier whom you left behind, I called Father O'Brien to help me, and together we dropped a noosed rope from the upper window over the arms of him who remained at his post, and drew it taut over the oaken rafter."

Father Terhune stamped angrily with his foot, but she went on without heeding him.

"Your man cried for help, but our men in the banquetting hall saw what was designed, and they were quickly out of the window and upon him. When the other man returned they were both bound and gagged as when you found them. I then drew up all my men and intended to make a charge upon your rear. The unexpected arrival of your reinforcements stopped the fight outside, and ere I could dispose of my guard, you returned with your brother officers."

"A pretty story enough," I said, "with yet another offender for the executioner on Monday morning."

She turned pale and bit her lip, while Father Terhune demanded:

"Will you never learn discretion?"

"I will see to it," said I, "that your rascally priest, O'Brien, is shot with the others."

She was pacing the room furiously.

"Your parole?" I said. "You surely will not say that the priest and your men were not on parole?"

"I say nothing," she replied.

I looked towards the tall priest, whose mental disquiet was plainly visible.

"You have heard the story," I said to the priest. "What can I do but see the sentence executed?"

At this moment the curtain at Catherine's boudoir was thrust aside and Terence, her brother, entered the room.

"So be it, sir," he said, folding his arms before me. "But you surely will not kill a woman. It is I who am under sentence. No one but yourself knows that it was not I who led the Carberry Hall men this afternoon."

Now, it had never entered my head to permit the execution of Miss Dillon, but neither had it occurred to me that it was really her brother who, though innocent, was under a legal sentence of death for her offence.

"A nice position for you, truly," I said, rising and facing Terence. "You wish me to explain to the English officers, I assume, that you, keeping yourself out of danger, instigated your sister to masquerade in your attire and draw this peril upon her; and that, therefore, you must both be excused."

At these scornful words both brother and sister advanced on me with hot denunciation. It required all the priest's severe authority to restrain them in their wrath.

When the young man had partly regained his control, he said, his eyes still ablaze with passion:

"I knew nothing of her rash purpose until told that she was a prisoner. Your insinuation of cowardice is not supported by my conduct since you forced your hateful troop into our happy home. But if you have doubt on that score, sir——"

His sword was half out, but the tall priest drove it back into its scabbard with a reprimand which restored an appearance of decorum.

"The situation is a plain one, Mr. Dillon," I said. "The six private soldiers must be shot at eight o'clock in the morning, on the day after to-morrow, and with them, a leader. Now, it is my General's opinion, supported by ocular demonstration, that you are that leader. If it be true that you had no knowledge of your sister's action, then I will explain the occurrence to General Ireton and ask him to mitigate her punishment."

"Insufferable!" cried Catherine.

"He would never believe it," said Terence. "Better death than the humiliation of my family! No, it is I who am constructively under sentence, and it is I who will face your marksmen Monday morning."

"But, Captain Marmaduke," said the priest, who had followed the argument attentively; "you surely would not consent to the murder of a man without guilt?"

It was my turn to walk the floor. After pacing its length with my hands behind me, I said:

"No, I would not do that, but the only alternative is an explanation of this young lady's secret."

"That must not be," cried Catherine. "Captain Marmaduke, spare me that, I implore you!"

She had never spoken to me in these pleading tones before.

"There is nothing else for me to do, my lady," I answered. "Either the sentence must be executed on the supposed leader of your band, or I must tell my General that the real leader was a woman. Settle it for yourselves, and send me an answer later."

I walked back to my own apartment, where I found General Ireton, his brother-in-law, Colonel Henry Cromwell, and Lieutenant Thornton Willoughby waiting my return.

"Ah, Marmaduke," cried Willoughby, in the hearty good fellowship that levels all rank ; "be seated, pray. You need a rest. There has been no such fighting since I enlisted."

"You yourself performed wonders on the east wall, Willoughby," I answered. "I never saw men held more steadily to a hard fight."

"The whole battle shows the valour of godly men," said the General. "But how about the despatch that young Dillon carried away from our camp yesterday, Marmaduke?"

"They sent it beyond here to Lord Castlehaven before our arrival," I answered. Then, for the first time, I thought of the paper which I had seized out of Catherine's hand that afternoon. "Here," I said, taking it from my boot, "is another paper ; the one that was sent ashore from the Prince's ship last night."

Without a word the General took it eagerly from my hand and tore open its seal.

"It is from Prince Rupert," he said, his face flushing with excitement. "He urges Ormond to increase the garrison at Drogheda.—Beat Cromwell and the English army there.—Young Charles Stuart will then come upon Irish soil.—And assume the crown of Great Britain.—He himself will touch the coast with his fleet below the English ships.—But beat the English at Drogheda and the Parliament is done for. Ah, Captain Marmaduke, you have given me what is vital to the interests of the people of England. This despatch will shape the policy

of our army henceforth. I must instantly with it to the English camp."

"Will you not wait for morning?" I asked; for it was now quite dark.

"Not one minute," he said, "I know the way well. I will take twenty men with me. You, John Marmaduke, will hold this post of Carberry Hall until you receive further orders. This is a good point for a garrison. I will leave sixty of my men here to reinforce your troop; transfer ten of them to fill your vacancies. That will give you one hundred and fifty stout fellows against attack, and if you carry yourself as bravely as heretofore I have no fear for your welfare. Henry Cromwell, you will follow back to our camp with the remainder of the men at the first break of day. And forget not to ask the Lord's blessing ere you start, for it will be His day, and we are on His work. Marmaduke, be watchful of the Irish prisoners; guard against their trickery. Thy father will act quickly on this despatch, Henry. Good night, and the Lord be with you!"

He had stepped forward to leave the room, when Catherine suddenly appeared in the doorway, dressed in a summer gown of pure white, her hair down her back, her cheeks supplying a rich colouring to the picture: a vision of loveliness that arrested us all.

"Which is General Ireton?" she asked, her manner so shy and modest that we all rose up and bowed before her. And then, recognising him by his age and the air of authority on his face, she proceeded:

"General Ireton, I am Catherine Dillon, daughter of Sir Patrick Dillon, until this morning the owner of this mansion."

Her proud lip trembled; the General was touched.

"Madam," said he, "I have learned of your bereavement, which, on your account, I deeply regret."

"My father was slain," she said, mastering her emotion with an effort, "in the defence of his home. My brother is now confined in yonder chamber under sentence to be shot on Monday morning for a similar offence. Is it so grave a crime to defend one's home, General Ireton? Surely it does not deserve death to do that?"

"Madam, your brother violated his parole and led his men to do likewise. This is his offence, and the laws of war provide for it the punishment you have named."

"But surely, General Ireton, my father,—is not one enough? My brother and I are his only children. My mother is dead. You will not extirpate our race?"

There was a sort of terror in her pleading, an agitation in form and voice which compelled the pity even of General Ireton, who had not quailed to force on the execution of King Charles.

"Madam," he said, "your situation is a melancholy one indeed. Truly it is. But this campaign of our army in Ireland has just commenced. We mean to be tender with the innocent. But clemency shown to the guilty would shed abroad a spirit of contempt that would cause us much difficulty in doing our work here."

"In doing your work here," she repeated, with a faint disdain. "But my brother is not guilty."

"Nay, madam," answered the General, "I saw him myself with sword drawn, at the head of his men."

"It was not he," she said; and I wondered whether she meant to confess her own part.

"But I saw him," said General Ireton, "yea, with these eyes I saw him this afternoon in the position I

have described ; and before that I saw him yesterday at our camp. If thou art his sister, then it was thy brother who hath offended."

"But will not my father's death answer for all?" she asked. "My father was slain only to-day."

There was the sign of sorrow on her mouth again. I could keep quiet no longer.

"I believe the real offender is a priest named O'Brien, General," I said.

"Oh, a priest!" said he, enraged in a moment. "Misleaders of the people always! We will spare your brother, madam. With your father's death so recent I would be averse to a further harsh judgment against your house. But the priest,—Captain Marmaduke, let him be hanged on Monday morning, not shot, but hanged. The others you will treat in your discretion. Come, Henry, and see me start."

"But this priest," said Catherine, in a tone of alarm; "Father O'Brien is not——"

"Enough!" cried the General, pushing past her. "I have tarried too long."

He walked away with Colonel Cromwell beside him. I followed him to the front door to see whether he would think of any last command. When I returned Catherine had disappeared, and only Lieutenant Willoughby was in the apartment.

"Oh, Marmaduke," said this ruddy-faced, enthusiastic youth of five-and-twenty; "who is she? Is it the Irish knight's daughter?"

I nodded.

"I have been so fighting mad since we came here," he cried, "that I have taken no account of her. But my heart!—she has wounded your arm only, Captain, but

me,—ah, me she has wounded here !” And he struck his breast.

Now, I felt a hot wave of anger swell within me at these words. What was it that engulfed my spirit in rage against this comrade of mine ? I had known him long and liked him much, and he had confessed his passion as one would to a true friend.

“Can you not see, man ?” he cried. “She has enchanted me. I would die for her ! She is the queen of women. Gad, Marmaduke——”

“Pish !” I said, in high dudgeon. “Only boys at school talk so.”

At this moment Colonel Cromwell returned.

“My brother is gone,” said he. “You were fortunate to intercept that letter ; your service will not be forgotten, Marmaduke. Besides, you have captured nearly three hundred horses, which will be a valuable acquisition to the Parliament force. By the way, that was as handsome a lady as any I have seen ; a rarely beautiful woman, Captain.”

I asked myself what business it was of his whether she were beautiful or plain ; and then, when I thought how unreasonable I was to resent his civil opinion, inwardly called myself a fool. So, making him an acquiescent answer, I passed out to post the guards for the night.

Willoughby followed me, and there was an air of injury in his face caused by my cold treatment of his confidence. I felt ashamed, and wishing to make some amends, said :

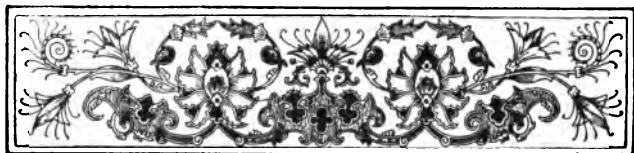
“Willoughby, I will put you in command of the fifty men whom General Ireton hath added to my charge. With his consent I will advance Wilton to Lieutenant’s rank in our company. How like you that change ?”

“It is a very noble action on your part, Marmaduke,” he replied. “I shall try to maintain your confidence in me ever.”

“Say no more. Here is my hand. Good night.”

“Good night, Captain.”





CHAPTER X

A REJECTED SUITOR

AFTER posting the sentries at Carberry Hall and giving out the word for the night, I walked across the open space in front of the gate and inquired whether the troops encamped there had everything to their comfort. Receiving an affirmative reply, I returned with the intention of going early to bed, for I was in great need of sleep. But as I reached the gate my way was stopped by the huge figure of Lord Kilmac, the leader of the beaten Irish force, who asked speech with me.

The August moon was shining at the full, and the scene was illuminated by a soft, silvery light. Our sentries were pacing back and forth on the walls, and a soldier on the ground held the gates open for my entrance. Behind me were the English reinforcements, already in sleep on the warm earth except for those who held watch. On one side were the bruised and broken followers of the Irish chieftain. In front of me, beyond the gates, lay the stately manor house, a thing of beauty in the moonlight. The rage of battle and the fierce slaughter of the afternoon seemed but the remembrance of a horrid dream, and the spirit of peace pervaded the night.

I asked Lord Kilmac if he had interred the bodies of his dead soldiers, and he answered that it was done. When I inquired whether his surviving followers had eaten supper, he replied that they had not and he could give them no rations until he should reach his house at Ballyrae, and that was twelve miles north, or a march of six hours in their fatigued and wounded condition. I called out to have Rob Cumber serve the Irish with biscuits and beer ere they started, and asked the Irish leader if he had further business with me.

"Yes, Captain," he answered, "I would have an interview with Catherine Dillon, by your favour, before I go."

There was an evil light in this man's eye, and under the suavity of his speech I could detect a brutal and revengeful nature. A request from him, my beaten foe, for an interview with her, my prisoner of war, on matters which could not be otherwise than hostile to my occupation of this place, was not reasonable. I told him I would not consent to such a conference ;—a reply which caused his face to darken with a baleful rage, and his hand sought the dagger in his belt. Instantly mastering his passion, however, he said :

"But, Captain Marmaduke, the matter I would discuss with yonder lady is one which gravely concerns her welfare ; and I tell you on the honour of a soldier, it has no connection with the war in the miseries of which she is now engulfed."

The man's speech was persuasive although his manner was repulsive. I had no desire to interfere in what might be a potent incident in her life. I asked him how long he would detain her.

"But a few minutes," he said, catching eagerly at my

change of front. "By the time my men shall have finished the repast you are even now generously giving them, I will lead them away."

"Enter, then," I said ; and he passed through the gate before me.

Arrived at the door of the house, I sent a guard to say to Miss Dillon that Lord Kilmac would have speech with her ; and telling Willis Fenton to keep a sharp eye on the Irish leader, I passed into a vacant room where the candles were lighted, and turned the pages of a romance of King Arthur. The table at which I seated myself to read was in front of a window and behind a large screen. My men were passing up and down the hall, and it was not long before I lost myself so far in the tale that I was unconscious of the presence of others in the room until I heard Catherine on the other side of the screen, say :

"No, Lord Kilmac, what I have said before, I now repeat. I will not marry you ; of that I am firmly resolved."

My first impulse was to shift my position so as to warn them of my presence. But the surprising subject of the Irishman's interview filled me with astonishment, so that I was rooted to my chair. Lord Kilmac replied :

"But consider your situation here. Your father, alas, is slain"—here I heard a sound of suppressed anguish ;—"you and your brother are prisoners to a murdering band of Englishmen ; why, they slaughtered the half of my command this afternoon !"

"Why did you not slaughter them ?" she asked. "You had the larger number."

"He had the protection of the wall," answered the Irishman, doggedly.

"But you had him face to face on the open plain," she said ; and I could easily detect her tone of contempt. "I tell you, Lord Kilmac, if I, a woman, had been there on my black horse, I would have emptied a saddle or two before giving the Englishman his victory !"

He made an angry exclamation, but, controlling himself, continued to press his suit.

"You are practically alone here," he said. "The English Captain will no doubt hold his garrison on this estate all winter if his General be not driven into the sea. You have no kinsman in this part of Ireland save your brother, who cannot long remain here inactive ; your Aunt Milucra is far south, and you have no refuge in this war. Be my wife, then, Catherine. Come to Bally-rae, and be the mistress of that castle that seems vacant until you shall come into it."

"It would not be vacant," she replied, haughtily, "if that right hand of yours had not dashed itself against the brow of its former mistress."

"By God !" he roared. "Do you say this ?"

I sprang to my feet and would have overturned the screen. I heard her step back a pace before him, and waited to hear her answer.

"Lord Kilmac," she said, with great composure ; "I wish you well in your military operations, although you have made but an indifferent beginning to-day."

"Your sympathies are with this tall Englishman," he cried. "I see it. You are already false to your country and your religion !"

I listened intently for her reply.

"The tall Englishman is a brave and true soldier, I verily believe," she answered. "I have fought him at every turn. But he would do injury to no woman ; and

I would rather be his prisoner, orphaned though I am through the act of his men, than the wife of one to whom womanhood can make no appeal even for its own life ! ”

There was a cry ; he had seized her wrist. I flung the screen aside and saw him raise his fingers to her throat. I smote him even as she said he had struck his wife, and he rolled insensible on the floor. So hard was the blow that my knuckles ached after it. As I turned my gaze from the fallen brute, she clutched my arm in both of her hands and I saw for once a look of terror in her eyes.

“ Madam,” I said, “ I did not mean to overhear your interview, although I am very glad I chanced to be present.”

She looked at me, utterly tired out and forsaken. Almost unconsciously, she still held tight to my wounded arm. The Irish chieftain’s allusion to her lonely condition had lodged itself in her heart.

What was I to do with this woman, whom the chance of war had thrown under my protection ? For the first time, I felt a sense of personal responsibility for her safety. Her brother was young and without experience in the world ; and he could be but an infirm bulwark to her in the perils of this war. She could not leave Carberry Hall, for Lord Kilmac had said she had no kin in this part of Ireland. Her home was invaded by my troop, and we would be its possessors indefinitely. As she held her frightened grasp on my arm these thoughts passed quickly through my mind. What was to become of this girl ?

A shadow was thrown by the candle flame upon the floor, and the tall priest stood before us.

"Madam," I said, "you are tired and ill. The adventures of this day have been too much for your strength. I pray you, retire to your room, and sleep as soundly as you may, for no harm shall befall you."

I now held her arm, and we walked past the priest to the door.

"Good night," I said.

"Good night," she answered, so soft and low I scarcely heard it.

The priest's eyes were on the body of the Irish leader. I called Willis Fenton in.

"Throw a bucket of water over this fellow's head," I said, "and when he recovers his evil mind, lead him beyond the gate to his followers."

Passing into my own apartment, I found Colonel Cromwell reading.

"What is your book?" I asked.

"Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*," he replied. "My father commendeth it heartily and has urged its perusal upon me. My brother Dick will none of it, though."

He laughed at the thought of Richard's indolence, then yawned.

"You are ready for sleep," I said. "For my part, I am fagged out. Let us to bed."

Leading him into a spacious room next to mine, where candles had been lit and everything prepared, I bade him good night, and, returning, got into bed as quickly as I could, and was soon in a profound sleep.



CHAPTER XI

SUNDAY MORNING WITH THE IRONSIDES

THE tolling of a bell—slow, solemn, deep-toned—aroused me from my sleep. It was five o'clock on a Sunday morning, and I surmised at once that the funeral services of Sir Patrick Dillon had commenced.

As soon as I had donned my apparel, I stepped into the hallway and met Colonel Henry Cromwell, who at that moment appeared from his chamber. We exchanged greetings.

"Marmaduke," said he, "if you will have Rob Cumber prepare a breakfast, when thou and I have eaten it I will put my men in motion for the camp."

"I think we shall find it ready," I replied, as we wended our way to the banqueting hall. Our troop cook had indeed laid down a fine breakfast for fighting stomachs, and we attacked it with the ardour of good health and true manhood.

The tolling bell kept our thoughts in a depressed situation, yet neither of us made reference to the funeral that was then in progress.

When the meal was finished we mounted and rode across the lawn and through the gates, and found the English soldiers getting ready for the march back to the

camp at Arklow. There were looks of pleasant recognition on the faces of the men as Colonel Cromwell drew near.

"The Lord bless you all," he cried.

"The Lord bless you," answered twenty of them in a breath, and then twenty more, and yet others, until all had returned his greeting. His trumpeter soon sounded to horse, and, after a pleasant word to me, the young officer rode off with his men. My dainty Dick stood motionless while I watched them until they disappeared in the wood. I then rode back, dismounted, and made for the chapel.

As I entered the door at the head of the great stairway an unfamiliar sight met my gaze. The marble altar was ablaze with candles. Before it were the two priests, the tall one chanting the Latin mass in a weird intonation of misery, while the short one swung a censer from a golden chain, sending forth the rich but stifling fumes of burning frankincense. In front of them, outside the altar-rail, was the open coffin and its silent guest. Candles were burning at its head and foot. On the floor, kneeling beside the corpse in mournful devotion, were the dead man's children, Terence and Catherine, both dressed in deep black. Back of them were some seven or eight of the household who had escaped incarceration by avoiding offence, and were now giving vent to their grief by emitting suppressed cries in their outlandish tongue. To one side, at the chapel's front, in view of all the rest, I beheld with amasement the figure of an English officer on his knees, rocking himself to and fro, seemingly in the deepest emotion, and reading the Latin responses from the Catholic prayer-book with an unctious tone of agony. This was Lieu-

tenant Thornton Willoughby, who interrupted himself frequently to look toward Catherine, in the hope, as I basely divined, that she would behold the tender sympathy of his sorrow. None of them perceived my entrance, and I stood beside the door with folded arms. I did not understand a word of the ceremony of the mass, because of the dead tongue in which they always chant it, nor did any other person there except Sir Patrick's children and the priests. But I knew that it signified the last expression of humanity in behalf of a departed member, and so I felt a great respect for it.

Some of my troopers had learned what was going on in the chapel, and they would have come up the stairs and doubtless been greatly scandalised to behold it all had not my presence in the doorway forbidden any liberty of that kind. As it was, they gathered together on the lawn and began to hold their Sunday meeting in the Puritan fashion.

When the mass was ended the tall priest left the altar and came beside me.

"Captain Marmaduke," said he, "I thank you for the protection which your presence has afforded us in saying the mass for Sir Patrick's soul."

Willoughby's eyes had followed the priest and when they caught sight of me the rosy red of his boy's face was heightened until it seemed like a fire that would consume him with embarrassment. He rose from his position of devotion and seated himself on a chair, gazing at the altar with a studied look of disdain. A swift glance from the kneeling maiden took in the priest's approach to me and also the change in the demeanour of my youthful subordinate; and the anguish in her face gave way for a moment to contempt.

I answered Father Terhune that there was no disposition on my part to permit interference with the freedom of religion at Carberry Hall. He said the body of Sir Patrick was now ready for sepulture, and I offered him my men to carry it to the grave. He stepped to Terence's side and repeated my offer in a low tone. The young man said, with anger in his voice, that he would not let the men who had killed his father bear his coffin. Then Catherine whispered a suggestion to the priest, who repeated it to me.

"Can you consent," he asked, "to releasing six men from the guard-house to perform this duty?"

The big brown eyes were fastened upon me. My answer was for her.

"I will cheerfully concede so much," I replied. Then, being willing to release Willoughby from his anomalous situation, I beckoned him to approach.

"Lieutenant Willoughby," said I, "you will bring hither from the guard-house six of the men who are now confined there, and permit them to act in this funeral. You will be responsible for them, and likewise for yonder short priest, and for Mr. Terence Dillon. I commit their custody to you for to-day."

He bowed, and as the tall priest walked back to the altar, whispered in my ear :

"Thank you, Captain, and forgive me for joining in this mummery ; but I am crazy over yonder beautiful girl."

He was off, but soon returned with a file of Irish men-at-arms, who looked the worse for having come out of gaol without washing or combing.

A crucifix was placed on the dead man's breast, and another in his hand. The coffin was then closed, and

the Irish soldiers lifted it to their shoulders and started toward the stairway. In front of them was Scolog the piper, playing a weird tune on his curious instrument.

A renewed burst of grief that arose almost into a shriek accompanied this action. Catherine sobbed violently as she walked past me supported on her brother's arm. Terence gave me a fierce and threatening look. Then Father O'Brien, the short priest, came with his censer, his prayers growing louder as a sort of lay to the piper's tune, and his chain swinging more violently as he reached my side. The serving-men and women passed me with ululations of woe and gave me black looks ; and one cried "*Finn Searbhan!*" which in their Celtic tongue means a fair-haired but very reprehensible person ; while another, a fat woman named Grania, who held the post of housekeeper, said "*Clochan chinn-chait!*" which conveyed her opinion that my body was esteemed fit to be the stepping-ground of a cat. The procession passed on through the lower hall with ever-increasing agitation, and so out to the burial-vault at the rear wall.

When all had disappeared I walked out upon the lawn, and found the full force of my troop, augmented by fifty men whom General Ireton had left with me, engaged in religious services, save only the men on guard duty. I sat down on the grass at the edge of the crowd, but no attention was paid to my presence ; for when it came to the worship of God the whole membership of the English army stood on an equality, and the private soldiers had nearly the whole of the preaching and public praying to themselves. A Sunday was the trooper's opportunity for unburdening his mind ; and if he did but skilfully girt his discourse with a Scripture text he

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could scorch both officers and comrades with a tongue of flame, and never fear upbraiding.

Tom Bufter stood up and gave out the sixty-eighth Psalm. There was no need for giving it line upon line, for the English soldier knew his Psalms by heart. Soon there was a burst of pious song which came from every throat :

“ Let God arise, and scattered far
Let all his en'mies be ;
And let all those who do him hate
Before his presence flee.”

I thought with some apprehension of the feelings of the Dillons, brother and sister, when they would hear this song of triumph. The voices of the Puritan soldiers rose high with the next verses :

“ As smoke is driven, so thou them ;
As fire melts wax away,
Before God's face let wicked men
So perish and decay.

“ But let the righteous all be glad ;
Rejoice before God's sight :
Let them exult exceedingly,
And joy with all their might.

“ Oh all ye kingdoms of the earth,
Sing praises to this King ;
To him who is the Lord of all,
Oh do ye praises sing.”

Then Joe Muzzycroft arose. Muzzycroft was a grizzled warrior who had followed the standard of the Parliament ever since the first battle was fought at Edgehill. I had a great respect for him, having found him always

a valiant man in action. But he was now near fifty, was growing somewhat fat and short of breath, and he had a way of saying personal things which were not so well disguised in his biblical phrases but they stung the men on occasion.

Private Muzzycroft turned his eyes slowly across the faces of the assembly.

"Bless God," he cried, in a loud, harsh voice. "This is His holy day. He hath given us strength to smite Beelzebub in his own citadel, on the hip——"

"Aye," cried Loftus Pearson, "and on the sconce, too, Joseph."

"He hath given us the victory over the Scarlet Woman," continued Muzzycroft. "Let His name be praised! Can we forget the blood of innocent Protestants that has been shed in Ireland?"

"Never, never!" cried a dozen voices.

"The Lord do so unto us when we forget it," said Muzzycroft. "Surely He will deliver us from the snare of the fowler. But will He?"

The speaker's eyes were now fixed full upon me. He was receiving the closest attention.

"The spell of the witch is a subtle thing," he said. "It hath been known to turn a man alike from God and from his country."

I heard a rustling of the curtain at the window of Catherine's room. I thought I saw a hand holding the drapery aside so that an inmate of the room might see and hear, and yet be unseen.

"The Lord thy God is a jealous God," continued Muzzycroft, speaking slowly across the heads of his audience to me. "Why have we left our firesides in England? Is it for dalliance? Is the sword to be

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sheathed and the Lord's vengeance to be put aside? Why are we here?"

"For Zion's cause," cried Loftus Pearson.

"For England's glory," said Hugh Brewer.

"For true religion," said Luke Marvin.

Muzzycroft had looked from one speaker to another as these responses were given. The last was the one he was waiting for.

"You are right, Luke Marvin"; and then his eyes reverted to me. "For true religion have we come. Is it not our aim to plant the true Church? But the spell of witchcraft will stay the arm of David. Delilah will rob Samson of his strength. Let, therefore, every eye be alert and every heart strong. Praise the Lord, and forget not all His benefits!"

Muzzycroft sat down amidst a chorus of "Amens." My face was burning hot,—whether from indignation or other cause I could not say.

Loftus Pearson rose up, a browned and weather-beaten man, of a kind but narrow mind.

"The true Church," he cried, speaking in energetic fashion. "We are commanded to carry the Gospel into heathen lands. Can there be a better place for it than Ireland? Is the true God known here? Do you know what mummery they did enact here this very morning? Do you know how they have profaned the Lord's day with their mass? Is it not time to prepare the soil for Christ's coming and plant the true seed? Is it not time to crush out the weeds which have been sown in Zion's vineyard?"

"Yea," cried Luke Marvin, rising as the other sat down. "But heresy hath spread over the earth, and God's face seems hidden on His own footstool. At

home we have the Episcopate in secret but flourishing strength. There, likewise, we have the Anabaptists and the Presbytery——."

"There is no Presbytery in this army !" interrupted Muzzycroft ; and a hundred voices shouted, " Praise the Lord for that ! "

"No," said Marvin, with a broad smile on his face. "Old Noll did turn out Jack Presbyter from the army, boots and breeches, and new-model it with the Independents, who are the Saints. And shall not the Saints possess the earth ? "

"Yea, while Old Noll is their leader," shouted Hugh Brewer ; and again the assembly expressed its approval with, " Praise the Lord ! "

"But," continued Luke Marvin, resuming the thread of his discourse, "there is dissension at home and heresy abroad. Can we establish true religion out of so much disorder ? With God's help we will do it, my brethren, even by the power of the sword. What better Captain could a poor company of troopers have on such a business than our own comrade, John Marmaduke ? "

This appeal brought forth a shout more unanimous and enthusiastic than anything that had gone before. His would be no soldier's heart that would not be stirred by so much devotion.

I arose and stepped to the front of the company, and when I faced them, although my countenance reflected a spirit of gratitude, I knew not how to address them, for I have already said that public speaking was not among my accomplishments. But I hold that true eloquence consists in saying a convincing thing in a convincing manner, and there was something within me that must be said.

"The Lord bless you," cried one, who saw my embarrassment.

"The Lord be with His servant," said another; and every face seemed softened with sympathy.

"Men,"—I said, and stopped.

"Aye," said Loftus Pearson, "we are men, of course, and all brothers." They all nodded their endorsement to this sentiment.

"Good men and true, Captain," said Hugh Brewer, endeavouring to help me over my diffidence.

"I could speak to you better if I were on the back of my horse," I said.

"Fetch the Captain's horse," called out Richard Trevor.

"Nay," said Muzzycroft, "an' you do that he will lead us into a fight!"—at which there was a hearty laugh.

"Right art thou, Joe Muzzycroft," said I, "to claim thy rest on the Lord's day. I have heard many of you say that the spirit doth move men to speech. Sure I think the spirit is with me at this moment."

"Praise the Lord!" shouted my auditors.

"I have listened to your remarks with attention," I continued. "But are you sure that you alone are right? Has God revealed Himself to the new-model army of the Parliament and hidden His face from others in England and Ireland who are not joined to us in the narrow line of our faith?"

There was wonder on the faces of many of my hearers. All were listening intently.

"May not the divine spirit speak in divers tongues?" I asked. "Why may not some follow the guidance of earthly leaders, rather than, as you claim, to treat with God, face to face? Why may not these same Presby-

terians obtain spiritual inspiration from the Assembly ;— why may not the Episcopalians hear God as interpreted to them by the Bishops ;—nay, why may not these poor Catholics enter into His glory even through the door of the priesthood ?”

There was intense silence. Some of my hearers were reflecting, others distinctly disapproved.

“We are in Ireland as the servants of the Parliament,” I said. “We are here on the business of the State. We must exact a strict accounting for England’s wrongs in the plantation matter.¹ But not in the spirit of revenge. Not to interfere with the freedom of religion. That blessing of a free conscience which we fought for at home we must concede abroad. Let us do the State’s business with zeal and fidelity, but let us not forget the common fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. Let us quarrel with no man in Ireland, or elsewhere under the broad dome of Heaven, because he squares not with us in matters of faith.”

The troopers looked from one to another.

“It is new doctrine,” said Hugh Brewer to his neighbour.

“I see no error in his speech,” said Loftus Pearson.

“The spirit did indeed move him,” said Joe Muzzy-croft.

Then, as I made a move to sit down, the spirits of my men broke loose. “Praise the Lord !” shouted some. “Well spoken, Captain,” cried others. “A new doctrine, a new doctrine,” exclaimed several, with enthusiastic approval ; while Lieutenant Elijah Haddon said, gravely :

¹ *I. e.*, the plantation of Ulster by the English settlers, who were driven out by the Irish with great cruelty and bloodshed.

"A new doctrine, yea, and a good one."

Joe Muzzycroft arose and gave out the forty-fourth Psalm, and it was sung with a burst of martial spirit and praise which carried my soul in fancy back to David's time :

"O God, we have heard, and our fathers have taught
The works which of old, in their day, thou hadst wrought.
The nations were crushed, and expelled by thy hand,
Cast out that thy people might dwell in their land.

"They gained not the land by the edge of the sword,
Their own arm to them could no safety afford ;
But by thy right hand, and the light of thy face,
The strength of thy arm, and because of thy grace.

"To Jacob, O God, thou my Saviour and King,
Command, and thy word shall deliverance bring.
We through thy assistance will push down our foes ;
In thy name we'll trample on all that oppose.

"No trust will I place in my bow to defend,
Nor yet on my sword for my safety depend.
In God who has saved us, and put them to shame,
We boast all the day, ever praising his name."

When we had finished our song the sun was at meridian. Hugh Brewer thereupon made a prolonged prayer, beseeching tender mercy for ourselves and the besom of destruction for our foes ; after which dinner was made ready, and we all did eat cheerfully thereof under the shade trees.



CHAPTER XII

"GLAS GAINACH"

WE had finished our Sunday dinner on Carberry lawn, and the troopers were beguiling the hot afternoon by discussing their adventures in camp and field, when a carbine shot broke the stillness of the air. I sprang to my feet, and saw over the wall a horseman in the garb of an Irish soldier riding furiously away. At the same moment two of my men dragged before me the resisting figure of Nora, Miss Dillon's maid.

"Out upon you!" cried the Irish girl. "*Trennchosach beagalltach! Garbha borb bran! Moralltach!*" (which meant, Strong and furious men! Rough and proud are you and black! What a great fury!) "*Buddagh Sassenach!*" (Saxon clowns!) "Why am I dragged like this? Saint Patrick bring a murrain on ye all!" And she spat in the face of Tom Bufter, who held tightly to one of her wrists.

"You foul-mouthed vixen!" cried Bufter, giving her arm a wrench which made her shriek with pain. I sternly bade them unhand her, and she stood trembling before me.

"Yonder horseman hath stolen one of our steeds," said Bufter. "He is one of the Irish prisoners. The

horse was beyond the wall cropping grass, while his owner, Dick Ewer, paced guard. The Irishman passed over unseen by Dick and hid on the other side. This wench came up, and, while pretending to say soft things to Dick, passed a letter over the wall to the Irishman, who mounted the horse, and is now off, doubtless, with a message to the enemy.”

I turned to Ewer, who was one of Nora’s captors.

“What have you to say to this negligence?” I demanded, “I thought you the most discreet among our troop.”

“I fired at the man, Captain,” said Ewer, sheepishly, “but he was off too fast. He would not have got the letter past my eyes, I swear to you, had not Lieutenant Willoughby engaged me in conversation so that my back was to the girl.”

“Who gave you the letter?” I asked of Nora.

“Who gave your grandmother her knitting-sticks,” she answered, saucily.

“Was it your mistress?”

“My sweet mistress did not see the letter,” she replied.

A sigh of relief escaped me involuntarily.

“I shall put you in irons,” I said, “if you give further offence. Back to the house!”

She was off quickly, and I was glad to be rid of her. I know how to deal swift punishment upon men, but I could invent no manner of protection against the women of this household short of what would seem cruel or immodest, and I preferred to run the risks of their conspiracies.

“Who was the horseman?” I asked.

“One Brian MacDoughal,” answered Ewer; “he is the best of their men-at-arms,”

"Back to the wall, then, and see that you keep a stricter watch."

I walked to the rear of the house and came upon Thornton Willoughby. He looked pale and haggard.

"Willoughby," I asked, "who is yonder fugitive?"

"Brian MacDoughal," he answered, without facing me.

"On what business is he bent?"

"I know not." He still did not look at me.

"Willoughby," I said, close in his ear, "on what business is he bent?"

There was no answer, and I passed into the house. Walking through the hall I came to Catherine's door, which was open. The fair mistress was seated, and there were signs of recent weeping on her face. Nora was relating her adventure with much gesture, but there was silence when I appeared.

"Pardon me, madam," I said, "but I would have speech with you."

"You are welcome, Captain Marmaduke," she said, with a smile. "Pray enter and be seated."

I removed the broad-brimmed hat which I had worn all day, and sat down on a chair facing her.

"I pray you, madam, tell me," said I, "whether you are a party to this latest breach of war on the part of this escaped man-at-arms?"

"I did not devise his errand," she replied, looking at me frankly.

"Will you tell me who wrote the letter he carries?"

"Father O'Brien wrote it."

"To whom is it addressed?"

"To Lord Castlehaven."

"What is its purport?"

“ It tells him that Cromwell makes for Drogheda.”

“ It is well that this meddlesome priest is to meet his death to-morrow,” I said. “ But it mystifies mé. He was in charge of Lieutenant Willoughby, a faithful and discreet officer.”

She merely smiled and looked bewitchingly beautiful.

“ Have you seen the Lieutenant to-day ? ” I asked.

“ Yes.”

“ Since the—since the close of the services this morning ? ”

Her eyes filled with tears.

“ Yes.” This was said without looking up.

“ Surely, madam,” said I, “ you would not connive to put a stain on this young man’s honour ? ”

“ I made no request upon him,” she replied. “ But I would speak to you of another matter, Captain Marmaduke. My brother is chafing under the confinement of his life here. He did but now seek his room with a headache. He would fain enlist with Lord Castlehaven for the war. Will you consent to that ? ”

“ Indeed, that would be impossible,” I said, startled at her request. “ That would be for me to furnish a good soldier to the enemy. It could only be done under an opportunity for exchange, and none such seems available at present.”

“ But he must go,” she said, with an air of determination.

“ And you ? ” I asked. “ If he should go, what of you ? ”

She was sobbing now, and some moments passed before she could answer.

“ I—I cannot stay here. You have slain my father ; you have broken the spirit of my brother ; you have

invaded and destroyed the peace of my home. And yet, —God help me !—there is no other place.”

Truly her situation smote me to the heart. There was not even a woman here of her own rank, for the sake of friendship and sympathy. I inwardly wished that I might summon my mother to her side.

“But this place is hateful to me,” she continued, with a flash of her old spirit. “The presence of your men, and the desolation they have wrought, make it unendurable. In the south of Ireland there are friends of my family ; Lady Milucra O’Fergus is my mother’s sister, and to her will I go, although the danger of the trip past hostile soldiers is grave.”

“At what place does she live ? ” I asked.

“Near Cork ; my aunt has a castle in that country. With my brother’s garb and my own horse I fear not to attempt the journey.”

I paced up and down the room in some perplexity. Her proposition filled me with sorrow. My presence was turning her out of her home amidst unknown perils ; yet I could neither bid her stay nor offer her escort to go.

“If you could but stay here, Miss Dillon,” said I, “until this war closes.” As I came before her again I observed that she had whispered a hurried command to Nora, who hastened out of the room.

“But it is only begun,” she answered. “It may last through the winter,—surely so, if your General be not overcome at Drogheda. I, and my maid, and the serving women are here amidst a foreign soldiery ; many of our own men are slain or fled. What a prospect is that ? ”

“Do you fear to remain ? Even if they were indeed gone would you fear to remain ? ”

“No, Captain Marmaduke, I will do you the justice to say that I have no fear while you are in command.” There was gratitude in her face as her eyes met mine. “But you may not always be in command. The dangers of your position are considerable ; and I would not trust your fanatic followers without your restraint.”

I bowed low and felt a flush in my cheek.

“I overheard your discourse this morning,” she continued, “and I respect your liberal sentiments most highly. But they are not the sentiments of your countrymen.”

“Well, madam,” said I, rising, “I beg that you will not put your resolution too hastily into execution. What a massive sword is that on your wall,” I cried, taking down a mighty blade that I had not before observed. “Surely no Irishman of our day hath carried this weapon?”

“No,” she answered, rising and advancing to my side with a new interest in her face ; “that is the fabled sword of Prince Cian, and it hath been in my family for generations. It was wrought by Elin Gow, who, a thousand years ago, was the King’s armourer. Bend its blade, please.”

I pressed the point on the oaken floor and bent the blade. It was very supple and bent near double.

“Prince Cian, of Munster,” said she, beginning a tale with her finger raised in the pretty way that one might use to hold a child’s fancy, “resolved to go into Spain and bring home the cow, Glas Gainach, that yielded milk and butter for all the people of that country. Before departing he told Elin Gow to make him a sword worthy of an Irish champion. No sword would please him, he declared, unless, while grasping the hilt, he

could bend the blade until the point touched his hand. Such a sword the armourer fashioned, as you have but now beheld."

I examined its workmanship with close attention, and she pointed out a curious design on the hilt, her fingers sweeping over my hand as she did so.

"Did he get the cow?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered, "but he had to slay a thousand men with this sword before he succeeded. Then he brought her home to Ireland. But he found he must always have a man go with her when she grazed, and this was a hard task for her attendant because of her great swiftness and strength. The day she moved least she would travel thirty miles going and thirty miles coming, and the attendant might rest only while she was feeding, which would be but for a few minutes at a time. He might not disturb her, nor go before her, nor drive her, for if he did she would have gone back through the seas to Spain."

"That was employment for winged Mercury himself," I said; and we both smiled. "Did the Prince find a capable servant?"

"Yes," answered my fair entertainer. "He employed this same armourer, Elin Gow, to attend Glas Gainach. All went well for a time, and Ireland never had such milk and butter before. But one evening on her way home she went down to drink from a sweet stream near the sea. Elin Gow forgot his instructions and took hold of her tail to hold her back. She gave him one look over her shoulder, then swept him along and went through the ocean with so much speed that the armourer, still holding on, was lying flat on the sea behind her. And she never stopped until she took him to Spain,

where the King and all the people received her joyfully ; and Elin Gow was made King's armourer, and lived there ever afterwards.”

“And do they still have good butter in Spain ?” I asked. But she caught the mischief in my smile, and tossed her head prettily to one side, and laughed. I thanked her for her story, and put the sword back on the wall. It was growing dark, and I passed out to change the guard.





CHAPTER XIII

A MIDNIGHT DEPARTURE

RETURNING to the lawn I came face to face with Elijah Haddon.

"Lieutenant," said I, "there is a sad duty laid upon us. There has been treason in the very seat of honour. You will go at once and place Lieutenant Thornton Willoughby under arrest. Let him be secured, and I will presently interrogate him."

Haddon seemed stricken dumb with astonishment. After a moment he said :

"Willoughby ?—impossible !"

"Impossible it seems," I replied, with a choking in the throat ; "and yet it is even so."

"But he did just now ride through the gate, well mounted, and in charge, as he assured me, by your command, of Terence Dillon, who rode beside him."

"And you permitted them to pass ?" I cried.

"Verily," answered Haddon. "He is the officer of the day—I thought it was but for exercise beyond the close."

"How long ago was this ?"

"Not more than ten minutes ; but they are gone three miles ere this, so fleet was their pace at starting."

"Could you and I overtake them?"

"You might do it with Dick. There is no other horse that could match Willoughby's for speed but yonder black one of the lady's."

"We will take that—anything—but these men must be brought back."

"They are gone too far, Captain. Besides, young Dillon knows this country well, and even if we could find his direction he would but lead us into the hands of our foes. Know you where he has gone?"

"To join Lord Castlehaven, I think," I answered, remembering his sister's words. I walked up and down the lawn in an agony of rage. "Thou hast seen me in battle, Elijah Haddon," I cried, "and know that I have a soldier's heart toward a fair foe. But treachery in our English army,—among the Ironsides,—betrayal by a brother,—by one of Oliver's men!—oh, would to God that I had him before my sword's point!"

"But the cause of this?" demanded Haddon. "It is beyond my understanding."

"And mine, too," I answered. "An insanity of the heart, I believe. But enough of this. Too lenient have I been with this pack. I will take the watch to-night until two o'clock; after that you shall hold guard. No more courtesies to our foes, and a strict accounting with them on the morrow."

I did not know what schemes the fugitives might have for bringing a force against us; therefore I doubled the guards and had the walls so well posted with sentries that ingress or egress would be impossible without our observation.

The night was dark and overcast with clouds until ten o'clock. Then the moon came out with a silver radiance,

and the stars made golden spangles on the dome of heaven.

Returning to the great gate at eleven o'clock, after a slow round of the sentries, I saw Willis Fenton on the wall to the right of the gate peering steadfastly into the dim vista of the night.

"What see you, Fenton?" I asked.

He made no reply and I mounted the wall and stood beside him.

"What is it?"

"A horseman, I think," he answered. "Let us shrink ourselves within the shadow of this gatepost and watch him. I have seen the moon glinting off his iron hat for some minutes."

We withdrew to the shadow of the gate and watched intently. Soon there was an object that came out of the dark wood across the open space ahead. It had the bulk of a horse and rider and moved slowly toward us. I called softly to the sentinel on the other side of the gate to make no challenge.

The strange horseman still advanced, stopping ever and anon to listen. When his horse moved it was at a slow walk. He diminished the distance very tediously, and we stood in an attitude of suspense until he was within twenty-five yards of our post. I could then make out the arms and habit of an Irish soldier.

"Train your piece on him," I whispered to Fenton.

"I have him sure when you give the word," he answered, sighting along the barrel of his carbine.

The horseman stopped again. His eyes were fixed upon us.

"Lieutenant Willoughby,—hist!" he said, in a subdued tone.

"Here," I answered, muffling my voice so that he might think it Willoughby's. He came nearer.

"Lord Castlehaven's rearguard is ten miles east. The officer in command will furnish protection for yourself and Master Terence's party, including the women. They move in the morning and I am to lead you there to-night."

"It is Brian MacDoughal," whispered Fenton; "he who fled this afternoon."

"It is well," I replied, in a louder voice. "Will you enter the gate until we do make ready?"

It was plain from the start he gave that he recognised me. But he evidently had expected to find Willoughby on the gate and even believed that it might be Willoughby who was crouching beside me. Looking beyond him I saw a line of pikes at the edge of the wood, indicating a band of horsemen just arrived.

"Lieutenant Willoughby is not here," I said, stepping out into the moonlight; "and if you do move your horse otherwise than to surrender, you are a dead man."

Ere I had got the words out of my mouth he turned his steed to fly, and I cried, "Fire!"

The carbine rang out on the still air. There was a sharp cry of agony, and MacDoughal, throwing his arms aloft, fell to the ground, and his horse galloped riderless across the plain.

Fenton sprang down outside the wall and ran to his side. In a moment he returned and I helped him to remount the wall.

"He is stone dead," he said.

"Go you at once to Lieutenant Haddon," I cried, "and bid him summon every man to the walls. There is an Irish force in yonder wood. Quick!"

Fenton was off instantly.

"Captain Marmaduke!"

A white-robed figure stood beneath me. It was Catherine.

"Why are you here, madam?" I demanded. "There is danger ahead and your house would be the safest place for you."

"Who was it that fell but now, Captain?" she asked.

"Brian MacDoughal," I answered.

"Alas, alas!" she cried. "Will nothing but the annihilation of my household surfeit you?"

"He broke his parole and is a traitor," I replied.

"Did he come for me?" she asked, with a naïveté that quite amazed me.

"Yes," I answered, for I had learned to be entirely ingenuous with this young woman. "He came to lead your brother and his party, including yourself and your women, and also Lieutenant Willoughby, to the protection of Lord Castlehaven's rearguard, now encamped ten miles east of here."

"Then he had not seen my brother and the Lieutenant?"

"It would seem not."

"Why have you summoned your men?" she asked, as my troopers began to arrive at the wall.

"Because of a force in yonder wood, though whether it be large or small I know not. And now, I pray you, go back to the house."

"What are you going to do with Father O'Brien tomorrow morning?" she persisted.

"You heard the order from General Ireton," I answered. "If the General had not pronounced sentence for his fault of yesterday, I would do it for his

offence to-day. He must hang to-morrow at eight o'clock."

This I said with great severity. The young girl stood silent and pensive for a moment, in great distress of mind. Then she suddenly inquired :

"May I mount the wall beside you?"

It was exceedingly difficult to deny her requests, so I gave her my hands and lifted her lightly to my side.

She peered cautiously across the plain at the immovable line of pikes. Then she suddenly placed her hands before her mouth, trumpet-like, and cried out in a clear, ringing voice :

"Holloa—in the wood, holloa!"

"Nay, madam," I protested. "this is most unsoldier-like!"

But again she cried :

"Holloa—in the wood, holloa!"

There was a stir beyond. A solitary horseman rode out into the moonlight.

"What, ho!" he cried, with the lungs of Stentor.

"Are you friends to Terence Dillon?" rang out the lady's voice.

"Aye," answered the Irishman, "to Terence Dillon, to his sister, and all his loyal house."

She turned to me in some agitation.

"Captain Marmaduke," she said, with trembling voice; "my hour is come. I must away from here. I beseech you, give me leave to go. I would take my black horse Bess, and two other horses for Nora, my maid, and Grania, my housekeeper. Have I your consent?"

"Madam," I replied, swayed by an emotion that I strove to conceal; "you would not depart thus, at the dead of night, with these unknown men?"

"Yes," she said, now in a flood of tears. "Anywhere—with anybody ; but I must away at once."

Forcing herself into a calmer state, she again leaned forward, and shouted :

"Holloa ! Whence come you, and what force have you ?"

The horseman withdrew to his fellows before he would answer this,—a thing I did not like. Then coming forward again, he cried :

"We come from Lord Castlehaven and we are ten men all told."

"I like it not," I said.

"But MacDoughal would not bring them hither if they were not trustworthy," she replied. Then, hailing them again, she called out :

"Terence Dillon will join you presently." To me she said, looking me straight in the eyes : "Captain Marmaduke, you will not oppose my going ?"

"Only by a firm protest," I answered. "If you are determined to go, the very helplessness of your situation would restrain me from forcibly detaining you. But I like it not. Here, take my ring," I continued, pressing it over the finger which I held in my hand. "Should danger beset you, find means to return it to me, and I will go to your aid wherever you may be."

"I will remember it, Captain Marmaduke," she said, pressing my hand in both of hers. "And now, lift me down, please." She gave herself into my charge with the trustfulness of a child, and I, springing down inside, made her step from the wall upon my shoulder and thence I caught her in my arms and sat her feet upon the ground with never a jar. She ran swiftly to the house, and I sent Willis Fenton to saddle the horses she had pleaded for. In twenty minutes three horses paced

down to the gate. The first one was Bess with a pretty rider astride who looked like Terence, but was, of course, Terence's sister. On the second was a fat woman, veiled, who rode her horse more awkwardly than I had ever seen it done before. Then came Nora on the third horse, to which a large bundle of clothes was strapped. I ordered the gates to be opened, and the three women passed out and rode across the plain, doubtless too much occupied with the seriousness of the step they were taking to say farewell. I watched their receding figures cross the plain, feeling ill at ease and forsaken. I saw them stop in front of the solitary horseman, and counted nine other horsemen riding out of the wood, who surrounded them. I saw the big woman on the second horse take a man's position astraddle. I saw two men on each side of the three who had ridden through our gate, whose bridles they seized. I saw Catherine raise her whip and bring it down with force in the face of one of the men. I heard her scream out across the plain :

"Help me, Captain Marmaduke! Lord Kilmac and Black Murtagh are here!"

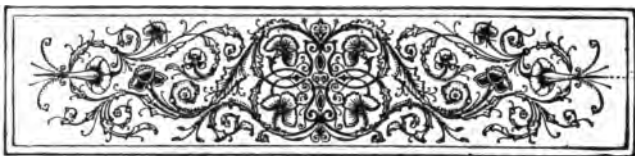
There was a shout of savage laughter from her captors, and they all rode fiercely away through the wood.

As I turned to spring from the wall, I saw a large woman peering through the gate at the retreating band. It was Grania, the housekeeper. I seized her by the wrist.

"Woe is me!" she cried, "to see what I have seen!"

"Who was on the second horse with your mistress?" I demanded.

"Sure it was Father O'Brien," she answered. "Woe is me, woe is me!" and she rocked herself back and forth in the sharp grief of a great bereavement.



CHAPTER XIV

IN THE DRAGON'S DEN

IT was plain to me that Brian MacDoughal had returned from his errand with an engagement to meet Thornton Willoughby on guard, and then effect the escape of the Irish inhabitants of Carberry Hall through Willoughby's connivance. At the very moment when he was communicating the finding of his mission to me in the belief that I was Willoughby, Lord Kilmac and Black Murtagh, with a handful of cutthroats, had ridden cautiously up on a gambler's chance of obtaining revenge on me. I had naturally assumed, as poor Catherine had also done, that these were a friendly escort with MacDoughal; and it was that impression, together with the hope that her brother was in some manner near her supposed rescuers, that had led her to invent a ruse to save the priest from the execution to which he had been condemned.

When I heard her voice crying out in the night that she was a prisoner to her cruel suitor, Lord Kilmac, and his unprincipled follower, Black Murtagh, the revelation filled me with alarm and dismay. I believed that Catherine's brother, Terence, and the traitor, Willoughby, would, ere many hours had fled, come against us with a

force from Lord Castlehaven's rearguard ; and the possibility of such a step would keep me at Carberry Hall to direct a defence and hold the important post which we had taken.

In great perplexity of mind I paced back and forth between our sentries until two o'clock, when Lieutenant Elijah Haddon relieved me of the watch, and I retired to my room, leaving an order that I was to be called on the slightest appearance of danger.

Once in my chamber, I laid aside my iron hat, back-and breast, sword, and pistols, and threw myself on the couch. But I, who have ever found sleep come so readily to my eyes, now tossed in utter wakefulness through the rest of the night. My mind was filled with imagined perils which the fair girl might even now be encountering ; and I chafed under the stern duty which held me here inactive when every impulse bade me fly to her rescue.

Whither would they take her ? How far would they dare to use force against a high-born countrywoman ? Could Lord Kilmac be prompted by a sudden and unholy passion to press his daring suit ? or was there some mercenary consideration which had led him to seize a bride in this bold fashion ? Would he be sustained in this abduction by the military factions which were now rising for the country's defence ? or, was there chivalry enough in Ireland to punish his crime against one of her first families ? Would he carry her to his castle and defy all champions behind stone walls ? or would he seek a safe and secluded retreat where he could remain undiscovered until the agitations of a state of war would cause her fate to be forgotten ?

Several times, as these reflections passed rapidly

through my mind, I sprang from the couch and began to arm myself, half-resolved to mount my horse and speed away alone to her assistance. Then the duties of my position as an English officer in command of a post threatened with attack would recall me from the rash design, and I would resume my supine and helpless chafings.

Then I asked myself what affair of mine it was that I should so distress myself about this girl. At every step of our acquaintance she had treated me, and justly, too, as an enemy of her country. She had multiplied the natural perils of my situation. She had attempted to thwart every plan of mine for the secure investment of Carberry Hall. She had held open and forbidden communication with the hostile forces that came against me. She had incited the priest O'Brien to violate his parole ; and, had it not been for the timely arrival of the English reinforcements, she would have made an actual assault on my rear with a body of men who were my prisoners of war. Finally, I told myself that she had fled from my safe protection under a deception that robbed me of the custody of a condemned foe, and if she had fallen into evil hands, I could not help it, and she must abide the consequences of her own conduct.

This seemed like a logical determination of the whole matter, and one might think that I had reasoned myself into a condition for sleep. Not so, however, for my mind worked in a circle ; and as soon as I came to the point where I cast her off to her fate, my thoughts crashed past that to the first question : Whither were they taking her ? And so it was all to go over again in precisely the same detail.

I thought of her fresh youth, of her superb beauty, of

her quick intellect, of her courage and accomplishments, of her soft and gentle woman's way when she was not ablaze with wrath. I thought of her trust in my honour, and of the child's faith with which she had handed herself into my arms when I lifted her from the wall. And then I thought of her in the possession of a ferocious and lascivious villain, which caused my heart to beat so violently that the blood coursed through its arteries with a quickened speed, and I saw the morning light breaking through the window with my soul in a rage of jealousy and apprehension.

I now rose up and put on my accoutrements, firmly resolved that come what might I would seek out the unhappy maiden and relieve her from her peril if Heaven would countenance my undertaking. As I passed out among my men the haggard fashion of my face attracted their attention, and, in order to thoroughly refresh myself after the mental anguish of the night, I went down toward the sea to take a bath, and beheld a ship riding at anchor in the offing, which they told me had arrived an hour before dawn. I scanned her narrowly, but there was no flag to tell her country, and if there were men on her deck I could not see them across the mile of water which lay between her and the shore. My men told me they had not seen a boat put off from the ship, although the late night had been quite dark, with no moon. I pursued my way alone, and, when I came to Roderick's Pool, determined to take my plunge there where I would be unseen from the ship. There was a sort of natural sea-wall that sheltered this pool, and it was a deep, cool, and inviting place to a man whose veins were hot as mine were then. Being entirely sequestered from my men, I took off my arms and

attire and plunged into the pool. The water was delightfully cold and as I rose to the surface and swam across its face my mind at once took on a healthy cast and the morbid sensations of the night were forgotten. My swift strokes soon brought me to the farther edge of the pool, and it instantly occurred to me that there was a secret here which I must discover. Black Murtagh and his band of men had escaped me by plunging into this pool on the first night of my coming to Carberry Hall ; and so, too, had Catherine. What I had taken that night for a watery grave had proved to be a subterranean refuge for my enemies. It might be useful to learn the secret of this place. At any rate there was diversion in making the attempt.

When I came to the foot of the high rock which bounded the pool toward the sea, I sank beneath the water and sought for a cavern. I went down twenty feet, feeling the rock all the way with my hands and feet ; but nothing could I find. Coming to the top for breath, I carefully inspected the face of the rock and at its centre found the rough image of an arrow pointing downward. This might be a sign. I swam under this arrow and then sank again. Down ten feet under the water I found a natural fissure, or opening, which seemed abundantly large enough to admit my body. I came to the top again for breath, and, after filling my lungs with all the air they would hold, sank for the third time and pushed my way into the wide hole.

An apprehension seized me that my lack of knowledge of the place might lead me into some submerged retreat from which I could not extricate myself in time for further air. Feeling nearly ready to burst, I pushed my way through the hole in the rock and then found myself

shooting up through the water on the other side. I would have lost my self-control in another moment and would have opened my mouth for the water to rush in and overwhelm my life, for with my spent breath I could never have got back through the opening beneath me ; but just when I felt that all was over with me, I came to the surface and found myself in a cavern the size of a large room, girt with rock at the roof and on all sides, but having an opening into the sea large enough for the entrance of a boat.

I took a deep breath and inwardly said a prayer of thanks for my preservation. Then I heard a man's voice cry, " Hist ! "

I sank for a moment, and then brought my face to the top so as to see and breathe.

The spot at which I came to the surface was under a ledge of rock, and the level of the water was below the floor of the cavern by a foot. It was not therefore easy for its occupant to see me without peering under this ledge : nor could I see him. I listened for voices, but heard none, and concluded that there was but one man there besides myself. I was in no condition to introduce myself to this unknown cave-dweller, so I sank again and returned to the top of the pool at the other side of the hole. The spirit of adventure was upon me, and, dressing and arming myself as quickly as possible, I passed up to the top of the sea-wall and peered over. My first view showed me an unbroken wall to the water, but when I stepped on a narrow ledge I again looked and plainly saw the opening into the cavern. A false step would precipitate me into the sea. Taking firm hold with both hands of the slight projection on which I stood, I suddenly swung myself down and rested on the

bottom of the cavern. It required all my skill to recover my equilibrium, and when I had gained a steady footing I found myself seized by the throat by one who held me in a grip the like of which I had never known before.

My assailant was a man of near my own age and height. Despite his rage, I instantly noted the great beauty and dignity of his face. He was dressed, though with a seeming carelessness, yet with elegance. His iron hat lay on the floor, allowing his brown curls to fall gracefully on his shoulders. A cloak of scarlet velvet hung from his neck over a steel corselet. A sword was in his belt, and boots which came to the hips when riding were creased down below his knees, showing a pair of black-velvet breeches and red-silk stockings. He had the unfailing air of authority, and a physical strength that I was now feeling to my great discomfort. In a moment he released his grip upon my throat and drew his sword.

"I perceive you are a gentleman," he said, "and you seem to come alone."

I was sputtering somewhat.

"Sir," said I, "your inhospitable greeting has well-nigh started my tongue out of my mouth."

"Whom do you serve?" he asked.

"The Parliament of England," I answered. "And you, sir?"

"I am for King Charles the Second," said the stranger, with a breeding and courtesy beyond any I had ever seen; "so, if you will draw your sword, we will have an argument worthy of two Englishmen on opposite sides of the war."

"I am with you in that," said I; "but may I not first know with whom I am to discuss this point? For my

part, I am Captain John Marmaduke, commanding a troop in the Parliament's army, and now in charge of Carberry Hall, taken by me a few days since."

"I regret to learn that Carberry Hall has fallen," said my opponent. "Can you tell me of the fate of Sir Patrick Dillon?"

"He was killed by one of my men," I replied.

"Then I am willing to avenge him. I may not tell you my name, sir, other than to say that I command yonder ship and that my rank is not beneath your own. For the present I cannot be other to you than the Unknown. Now, sir, will you kindly draw?" He laid off his scarlet cloak.

"I am your servant, sir," said I, bowing low and drawing my sword.

As I took up my position for the combat, the Unknown eyed me narrowly and I him. I have already said that he was about my age and height, but he looked now a trifle older than I, and his frame was so compactly knit that I wondered whether it concealed a strength superior to mine which might lead to my undoing. He gave me full time to prepare myself, and when I planted my right foot and lowered my blade for his attack, he said, "Now, sir,—on guard!" and advanced.

Our swords crossed and were instantly in play. I had my back to the cavern's door with the subdued light of that orifice full on my foe, so that the advantage of position was with me. And right glad I was to have it so, for I soon found that I had met my match. We fought cautiously for the space of a few moments, each testing the other's skill; and then he seemed to have sounded my art, for he pressed me with every resource that I had ever learned. I found, too, that his wrist had

the strength of iron, and when I attempted to beat down his guard he parried me with a deft hand that knew nothing of fatigue. Our swords crashed for five minutes until the darkened cavern seemed alight with their sparks, and our quickened breathing began to tell of energy consumed on each side. Then, when he had let me press him back a step or two, I felt a spell of overconfidence, and lunged my sword at his breast. He parried the well-aimed thrust, and then, wrapping his blade under my hilt, he gave a sudden twist that was meant to disarm me. It would have done so, too, had I not lightened my hold on the weapon so that it had flexible play in my hand. As it was, my sword and my arm went high in the air, and the blade of the Unknown passed between my arm and side, cutting the fastenings of my corselet, which flapped open, impeding my free action. He had come so close in upon me that I seized his wrist with my left arm, and in the grasp in which I strove to hold him my right hand fell over his back with my sword still tightly clenched. His left arm fell around my neck, and we stood glaring fiercely at each other, knowing that death would be the portion of him who should first fall back from that imperative embrace. For a full minute we breathed hot hate into each other's face, and I felt that the breaking-away which would soon be inevitable would leave me under the fatal disadvantage of a disordered breast-piece. His own countenance was not without apprehension, for he had found my sword skilful beyond his calculation. In this situation of mutual peril, his face lost its fierce zeal and was lighted by a smile that came from a knightly heart.

"Captain Marmaduke," he said, "you are the first man who ever saved his life from that Portuguese thrust that I but now did give you."

"It is a new device to me," I answered, as we still held each other fast bound. "I have never seen it used in England. I will watch for it again."

"Nay," said he, "its potency doth lie in its surprise. I would hardly try it twice on a master of fence ;—for such I have found you to be. Shall we have a truce?"

"As you will," I said, right glad to have a chance to adjust myself ; and we parted from our embrace with mutual respect. "I will take off my back- and breast, and then——"

"Nay, Captain," said he, laughing ; "thou art no more anxious to finish this combat than I am. My only trick of fence that thou wert ignorant of has failed. You on your part have none that is new to me. Let us put off further warfare until we meet again."

"I thank you for your nobleness," I said, "for I do acknowledge that the cutting of my buckle would have made it awkward to resume our fight. And now, have you had breakfast, Sir Unknown?"

"Not a bite," he answered, in hearty good-humour, and resuming his cloak. "I had my fellows row me ashore in the last hour of darkness, and expected to sit at table with Sir Patrick Dillon and his family this morning. But when the sun rose I beheld your Parliament's knaves on the wall, and I was pondering how I could get back to my ship, when you invaded my retreat."

"I shall bring you to a good breakfast at Sir Patrick's table," I said, "and afterwards will send a signal for your men to come for you. To this I will engage my honour."

"I am much beholden to you, Captain Marmaduke," he said, pleasantly ; "but I would not embarrass your duty so far. If you will have your men fire a gun twice from yonder wall it will bring my pinnace ashore."

"What is the legend of this cavern?" I asked, looking round the place.

"They told me that this is the Dragon's Den," replied the Unknown. "Some fabled monster lived here in past ages,—a green thing with fiery eyes and many legs, doubtless, who preyed upon the Irish maidens, perchance. Let us hope he will not appear while we are here."

"There is such a dragon abroad even now," I said, "who preys upon the fairest daughters of this unhappy land. Even now I must away in his pursuit."

"You speak in riddles, Captain."

"Sir Patrick Dillon's daughter was carried away from here by a licentious knave last night,—one Lord Kilmac."

"And where was the English Parliament's protection?" demanded the Unknown, with a curl of his proud lip.

"She left by her own wish," I answered, feeling the stab of his tone. "She thought to join her brother, but fell unwittingly into the hands of Kilmac."

"And whither has he taken her?—I know him well by reputation; the cruellest villain in Ireland."

"I know not for a surety. But I do think he has taken her to his castle of Ballyrae. Thither will I march with my troop to-day to her rescue provided yonder ship make no demonstration against this post."

"If that be your only apprehension," replied the Unknown, "my ship will lift her anchor and away in an hour. Furthermore, since my plans as to Sir Patrick Dillon must be abandoned, I find some leisure on my hands, and would as soon strike a blow against this ruffian and aid a lady in distress. What say you, Captain,—shall I come to Ballyrae and fight the Kilmac under your lead?"

I looked into his face for a sign of treachery, but there was no craft there. I seized his hand in a grasp of honour.

"It would be an adventure worthy of you," I said.

"I owe this fellow Kilmac a grudge myself for broken faith; he has betrayed our dearest secrets. I will be there at noon to-morrow," he said, wringing my hand heartily. "Leave what guard you will at Carberry Hall for form's sake, but here is my signet,"—he offered me a ring from his finger,—“if Castlehaven do send against you, have your man in charge show him this for a sign of truce until you return.”

"My thanks are thine," I said, "but Lord Castlehaven will hardly send his men hither, for they are all on the march to meet our army at Drogheda. Keep, I pray you, your ring. The guard I will leave can hold the place against all stragglers until we do summon Ballyrae."

"Then fire your gun and let me away up coast with my ship. I will strike Ballyrae on the north side at high noon to-morrow."

Bidding him adieu I clambered up the edge of the rock and returned to Carberry Hall. A gun soon thundered twice from the wall. Straightway a boat cast off from the ship and made for the shore. "Shall we take her, Captain?" asked Joe Muzzycroft.

"No," I replied, "she shows no colours, and I have made a truce with her commander, though he is unknown to me."

The little boat was soon lost under the cliff and when it appeared again it was pulling away lustily with a large man in the stern who wore a plumed helmet and was wrapped in a bright cloak of scarlet.

"I have seen that man before, Captain," said Joe

Muzzycroft. "He whipped our right wing and centre at Marston Moor before Old Noll charged and saved the day."

"Impossible !" I cried, in astonishment.

"But it is true," said the man-at-arms, "And he took our General Ireton prisoner at Naseby."

Was it, indeed, the King's nephew, Prince Rupert ?





CHAPTER XV

OFF TO THE RESCUE

WHEN I had watched the knightly figure of the Unknown return to his ship I turned my gaze inshore and beheld a horseman riding from the north at full speed. Arriving at the gate he threw himself from his horse and ran toward me in the appearance of extreme distress. My surprise was great to recognise Terence Dillon.

"Captain Marmaduke," he cried, speaking with much emotion, "I have come hither to implore you to rescue my sister from yonder foul villain. How much it pains me to seek the aid of one who is the foe both of my family and my country I will not attempt to describe. But the Irish troops have all marched south except his garrison, and he is a traitor to Lord Ormond and Lord Castlehaven. But they will give me no help, and I come to you in the last extremity of woe. Save my sister, Captain Marmaduke, from a fate worse than death. See, —she herself has sent you this ring, and with it she has charged me to invoke your chivalrous aid."

"How came you by this ring?" I demanded, restoring it to my finger, for it was the one that I had given to Catherine on the wall the night before.

"When the villain, Lord Kilmac, and his devil's mate, Black Murtagh, fled away from here last night with my sister and her two attendants in captivity, I and Lieutenant Willoughby met them half-way between here and Ballyrae. Hearing Catherine's cry we both charged in on her captors. We were of course helpless against a superior force. I saw that my sister's horse was held by two men, but on her first recognition of me she passed your ring to me with the message I have just given you. I thrust my sword into one of Kilmac's men, with what effect I know not. Willoughby was struck down, and, I think, carried off a prisoner. Perceiving that a rescue was hopeless, and being beaten away from my sister, I drove my horse through their ranks and returned hither by a circuitous road across the hills."

"And whither has Lord Kilmac carried your sister?"

"To his castle at Ballyrae, I think," replied Terence. "Do me this service, sir, I beseech you," he continued, in an imploring tone, while the tears coursed down his haggard cheeks. "Do with me thereafter as you will; I have no claim upon your clemency; gladly will I submit to your judgment upon my offences. But save my sister, Captain Marmaduke,—you will save her, sir, you will save her, will you not?"

As he talked on in his rapid, almost incoherent pleading, I felt my own heart wrung with anguish at the fate which threatened the beautiful girl. It was not mere sympathy for him that stirred my emotions so deeply. A great sense of personal bereavement had come over my spirit since Catherine's rash mishap of the night before. It needed not this youth's agitation to stir me to undertake her rescue. But I was willing enough to put it on that ground, and so I said:

"Mr. Dillon, I did give my ring to your sister, and she hath returned it invoking my aid. So be it. I will to her rescue as soon as my men can be got ready."

"God and our Lady will bless you," he cried, crossing himself fervently.

I was about to descend from the wall when I beheld a troop of English horse, one hundred men, riding out of the wood from the direction of Arklow. They were followed by a train of ten waggons. Fifty paces in front of the gate they came to a halt. I sprang down, mounted my horse, and rode out to greet them and learn their errand.

Captain Rodney Ballantine was in command, and we exchanged cordial greetings. Our men on the wall gave a shout of welcome, likewise, which the others returned.

"A letter for you, Marmaduke," said Ballantine, "and a merry expedition for you, I think, will be revealed by its perusal. This waggon train would be enough in itself to prove as much."

I tore open the letter. It was from General Cromwell, and read as follows :

"NEAR ARKLOW, IN CAMP.

"CAPTAIN JOHN MARMADUKE :

"We have information this morning that it is to the Parliament's interest to possess Lord Kilmac's castle of Ballyrae with such speed as God may grant. We have sent you another troop and ten men over from those soldiers which our son, Henry Cromwell, took away from you this morning. Also, waggons with stores and ammunition. This will give you two-hundred-and-fifty effective. If there be no hostile ship off shore it is not likely that your post at Carberry Hall will soon be come against, the enemy marching, as he doth, with all avail-

able towards Drogheda. Go you therefore presently against Ballyrae. If the garrison there be too strong, take no undue risks, but return to Carberry Hall and make report to us. Otherwise, use your own discretion as God may direct, and do what will be for His and England's glory. This to you by the hand of Captain Ballantine ; use him well. Thine,

“OLIVER CROMWELL.”

A thrill of pride swept over me as I read this letter. It was the first direct order I had ever received from the Lord General, and the responsibility which he had put upon me stirred a grateful emotion within me. Then, too, it seemed so opportune to come thus quickly upon the business of Catherine's rescue, that I saw the hand of Providence in it.

“Upon my life, Ballantine,” I cried, grasping his hand, “this is, indeed, an expedition worthy of good English hearts. Right glad am I to have you with me, Rodney. How far had you gone on your return to the camp ere you were sent back?”

“Not more than three miles,” he said. “So we are still fresh and ready to follow you at once.”

I set my two lieutenants, Haddon and Wilton—for Wilton had been promoted to Willoughby's place upon Willoughby's appointment to command the half-troop,—to get our men, horses, and rations together. Then, as I looked into the eager face of Terence Dillon, who followed me round with a wistful curiosity as if he feared I might recede from my promised undertaking, a sudden thought possessed me.

“Mr. Dillon,” said I, “there are some thirty men of your household here capable of fighting.”

He caught my notion in an instant.

"Yes," he answered. "Give them to me, I pray you, Captain Marmaduke, and they and I shall follow you in this expedition as loyally and devotedly as the best Englishmen in your army."

"Do you engage your honour that you will fight strictly under my orders, and that you will return here when I so command?"

"In all things we will be your men, Captain Marmaduke, until this business shall be ended. I so engage my honour."

"So be it," I said. "I believe you can do good service with them. Get them ready, then, and quickly, I pray you."

The pleasure of the unexpected task which I had set him drove the sorrow out of his face. I have observed that men can ever forget their adversities when they put themselves to the accomplishment of fruitful work.

Looking out to sea, I now saw the ship of the Unknown making north under a good sail. I detailed thirty men from Willoughby's half-troop to remain at Carberry Hall in charge of Sergeant Alexander Peters, and they received their assignment to this inactive service with anything but grateful looks. I commanded that no disrespect should be offered to the priest, Father Terhune, or to the Irish women of the household. Then, when all was in readiness, I rode to the head of my little army of two hundred and fifty men,—the largest command I had ever essayed,—and, turning my horse, surveyed them with a critical eye. At the front were Lieutenants Haddon and Wilton, and then came my troop, now full to the hundredth man. After them rode Terence Dillon in a bright cuirass and steel cap; and his Irish company

of thirty stout fellows, done up in green doublets, high boots, and iron hats, and armed with pikes. A stout Irishman, one Balor MacLuga, was his Lieutenant ; and Scollog the piper rode with them playing a tune on his bag. Following them were Captain Rodney Ballantine and his full troop, mounted, dressed, and armed like ourselves. Next came the twenty men left over from Willoughby's half-troop and led by Lieutenant Percy Waters. In their charge were two twelve-pounder cannon which we had taken from the wall and mounted on gun carriages, each drawn by four horses. In the rear was the waggon train, comprising the ten vehicles sent me by the Lord General, and four others from Carberry Hall. In these were provender for our beasts, food for ourselves, and much shot for our enemies ; likewise, two score of scaling ladders, many plank timbers, and some oaken beams, besides tents.

The faces of the men showed them to be in the best of spirits, and I would have defied the world to produce a more soldier-like lot. A nod to William Cozens brought forth a martial blast from his trumpet ; and we were off at a brisk trot for Ballyrae.





CHAPTER XVI

BEFORE BALLYRAE CASTLE

OUR rapid march brought us in sight of the noble castle of Ballyrae about two o'clock in the afternoon of Monday. This stately architectural pile had stood for four centuries, and it had once been the home of Irish Kings. Its present owner, the brutal and profligate Lord Kilmac, had made himself an object of hatred to the half-savage peasants whose rude hovels surrounded its ancient walls. Nevertheless, as we drew near, we discovered that the inhabitants of the demesne were hastily withdrawing themselves within the shelter of the castle as much for their own protection as for their lord's defence.

One of their churls, a lad of sixteen, was caught by my men as he raced for the castle, and brought before me. Refusing to be coaxed into communication, a threat of instant hanging loosened his tongue ; and, after much questioning, I learned that Lord Kilmac had returned to his castle early on the morning of the previous day with but seventy-five of the retainers who had fought with us on Saturday. He had since called in all the available men from his outlying acres, giving him a force of four hundred fighting followers, with two hundred women and

children besides. It was a fair surmise that at least half of his effective force was composed of a horde wholly untrained to war, while so much of the remainder as had seen service under his banner were not to be feared for superior discipline, as we had already had abundant opportunity for knowing.

Besides, Lord Kilmac had made himself an outlaw in the view of his own military party, by betraying Owen Roe O'Neil's plans for English money, and both Lord Ormond and Lord Castlehaven had set a price on his head ; and it was the knowledge, doubtless, of the treason which this implied that had led the Unknown to offer me his services after our unfinished encounter in the Dragon's Den on this morning.

After learning all that the trembling and gaping barbarian would stammer forth, I dismissed him, and he sped away and entered the castle. We had halted two furlongs from the great house, at the edge of a wood, and while my men were taking refreshment and looking after their horses, I rode forward a few paces and carefully surveyed the object of our attack. As my story is so soon to take on again the active pace of war, I shall set down at this point a brief description of the castle, in order that my narrative may not be interrupted by details which the reader may as well receive now.

The castle of Ballyrae was one of the noblest houses in Ireland. It stood against a background of wooded hills. The length of its walls was five hundred feet and their width half of that. They were twice as high as the tallest man in our army. Behind them, in the centre, the lord's dwelling place, called variously the keep, donjon, or citadel, reared an imposing facade, at one end of which a turret broke the angle, while at the other a massive

tower nearly touched the lowest clouds. At the rear corners of the keep two smaller towers, or turrets, were seen, while at its front and rear entrance and exit were given by the posterns, or doors of oak. The keep was so strongly built that if the walls were carried and the invaders possessed the baileys, or yards around the keep, the besieged might still retreat within it, and harass their foes by a fire from windows, turrets and tower, and be safe from a fight at the sword's point until the posterns were forced or the windows scaled.

Behind the keep, in the rear bailey, to the left, were the soldiers quarters, and to the right, the stables. At either side were wells giving sweet drinking water. In the front bailey, to the right, was the chapel, with a pretty spire surmounted with a golden cross. Near the chapel was the priests' house, occupied by a company of twelve of their Catholic fathers.

Outside the walls a deep moat circled at a width of eighteen feet, and was fed by the water from an estuary which passed thence toward the sea. On the front wall, at either end, were short towers which were used for rallying the defenders. In the middle the wall rose to twice its general height, and at this point it was pierced by a broad gate, and was ornamented on either side by a barbican, or sheltered fortification, for defence of the entrance. The barbicans were supported to the wall by corbels, or brackets, of hewn stone, between which were the machicolations, or openings for firing. Set in grooves in the masonry at this opening was the portcullis, made of crossed bars of iron, counterpoised by weights hung over pulleys at the top, and raised or lowered at will by a chain through the wall which was controlled from within. Standing upright in front of the portcullis was the draw-

bridge made to span the moat in time of safety. On that side of the moat next the castle wall was the counterscarp, or bank of the ditch, furnishing a seat for the drawbridge and running off to a semicircle beneath the barbicans. On the glacis, or outer edge of the moat, beyond the point at which the drawbridge would touch the bank, was a redoubt, or small defence work, at present not occupied. At the left end of the wall was a small postern, or sally-port, now shut with a heavy barred gate.

Around on the right and left sides of the wall were posterns and counterscarps. Opposite to them, across the moat, were bastions, or fortifications, resembling somewhat in plan the head of a spear laid flat. The bastion, as an enemy would approach it, presented a sharp point or salient angle, the two low walls of which retreated from each other in the shape of a V, then drew together so that they nearly met, like a diamond, but at this point, called the gorge, retreating from each other again to the edge of the moat. There were no drawbridges at the side posterns, and if the bastions were manned for defence, a retreat into the castle could be effected only by the use of timbers thrown across the moat for that purpose.

At the rear of the castle wall was an escarpment, the ground beyond the moat being cut away nearly vertically to prevent hostile approach on that side.

The entire wall, where it was not set with towers or turrets, was battlemented in a most picturesque way, the alternate merlons and crenels, or closed and open spaces, being designed with great beauty. The whole effect of this feudal fortress, as I surveyed it on an August afternoon, was to impress the beholder with its majestic

solidity and strength. But with an incapable garrison the strongest castle will be but as an egg-shell to an indomitable attack.

When I had finished my inspection of Ballyrae, I joined my men at their refreshment, and afterwards gave my horse a good rubbing. In the meantime, we could see that the portcullis had been lowered, the drawbridge raised, and an active preparation for defence begun.

Choosing William Cozens and four of my officers, we rode forward at a gallop past the redoubt in front of the gate and halted. The trumpeter wound a summons, and Lord Kilmac appeared on the wall, and simultaneously a hundred of his men-at-arms stepped into the crenels on the parapet. There was intense stillness for a moment, and then I called out :

"I do summon you, Lord Kilmac, to yield this castle of Ballyrae to my army for the use of the Parliament of England."

A shout of derisive laughter greeted this demand.

"Do you call yonder squad of cutthroats an army?" he cried. "Or is that but a forlorn hope in advance of the army?"

Another burst of laughter rewarded his cheap wit.

"Furthermore," I shouted, "you will instantly deliver into my custody, in behalf of her brother, who is with me here, Miss Catherine Dillon."

His face took on a savage hatred.

"What if I scorn your impudent demands, my boasting youth?" he said, contemptuously.

"Then," I returned, "you and your people are to expect the last extremity of war."

"I do defy you," he cried, "and do say you nay both as to my house and the lady." Then, in disregard of my

herald's privilege, he ordered the men nearest him to fire on us ; but ere they could bring their pieces into line we set spurs to our horses and rode back to our friends.

It was now three o'clock, and I ordered the siege to begin at once. While I had been delivering the summons our men had unloaded the waggons of all their camp materials and set up the tents. The waggons, with the timbers and ladders, were now filled with troopers, and driven forward to a hundred yards from the moat. The men on the wall fired their guns, but beyond crippling some of our horses they did no damage. With the waggons in front of us we soon constructed a line of redoubts that gave us a rude shelter from Lord Kilmac's steady fire. This line reached across the whole face of the front wall, and beyond it so that we could command the posterns at each side. The waggons themselves were kept at the front to protect our operations further. We had thus, in a very short time, established ourselves in a position so far advanced that we could act against the enemy at short range. Sending all the waggon horses back to the camp, I had the rest of my men come up on foot, and with them the two siege guns, the horses of which were likewise returned to the rear, except one that was shot dead.

By four o'clock we were in a good situation, and, when I had selected a point in the wall to the left of the gate, I gave the order to fire, and our cannon belched forth flame and shot, and we gave a great cheer as the first ball crashed true against its target. Boom ! went the cannons, and the hills behind the castle echoed their thunders a hundred times. Boom, boom ! as fast as our men could work them, one shot every three minutes, and with every discharge a breaking in the solid masonry of

the castle. Nor did the gunners have all the work to do, for our men between their cheering were firing their carbines until all the defenders had left their exposed positions on the battlements and sought shelter in the towers, turrets, and barbicans, from which they fired at us with ineffectual aim.

While this work was going on with but indifferent success,—for the mighty wall yielded most slowly to our cannonade,—I had some of our men build pontoons out of the planking, that we might have them ready for crossing the moat as soon as a breach was made.

Terence Dillon was in a fever of excitement throughout the afternoon. He recklessly exposed himself to fire a dozen times, and he was continually making the most impracticable suggestions to me ; his sister's unhappy predicament leading him to propose the reduction of this stronghold by means the absurdity of which would have been apparent to himself had he been in a less disordered state of mind. "Can you not break in the gate with a battering ram?" he cried. "Can you not take it by assault? Is the moat so deep that we cannot wade across it? Give me leave to force the side posterns, and by our Lady I will do it, or die attempting it."

"But I would not have you die attempting it, Mr. Dillon," I answered, patiently. "We are on the right method, I think, but it may take several days to effect our purpose."

"Several days!" he cried. "And what will then become of my sister?"

I could scarce contain a groan myself at this apprehension ; but I only replied :

"We must await the due course of the siege."

"Look yonder!" cried Terence, pointing to the top of the great tower. I raised my eyes aloft, and beheld a procession of twelve brown-robed and bearded monks on the extreme height of the tower, passing round and round in slow step, and evidently chanting their prayers, although we could not hear a sound from them, so high above us were they.

But from the aperture in the tower just below them we beheld a sight which much more strongly chained our gaze. A woman in white appeared at this window, and seemed to look down upon us with intense interest. Suddenly another figure, garbed and hooded as a monk, but young and without a beard, came beside her. She started in surprise, and he addressed her with passionate gesticulation. She raised her hand as if to spurn him, and he caught her wrist and half-dragged her out upon the stone ledge.

"God confound him!" cried Terence. "It is my sister! What is yonder base monk attempting to do? By Heaven, he is trying to throw her from the tower!"

"No," I cried, "he is trying to fall thence himself,—or else, as I do live, he is urging her to leap to death with him! See,—she struggles in his grasp! She breaks his hold! She is appealing to him,—is promising something at our hands,—threatens him, I think! His courage fails,—he is cowed,—he disappears inside the tower! See her wave her hands to us! See her pleading attitude, Mr. Dillon! She, too, disappears. The cannon, men,—keep up your booming! There, that was a good one! Thank God, the breach is made!"

A wild cheer rang out from our men as the last shot went clear through the wall, carrying stone and mortar

with it. The monks on the tower stopped their march and threw up their hands in abject terror, crossing themselves ever and anon in their broken prayers. Lord Kilmac threw a larger force into the left barbican so as to sweep the wall with his carbines if we attempted to storm the breach. It was now eight o'clock. The day was fast declining. Darkness was coming swiftly on. We could take no advantage of our work to-night. Another shot widened the opening. Then a brown-robed figure suddenly filled the breach, and the young monk whom we had seen on the tower with Catherine came swiftly out carrying a plank on his shoulder. The defenders were nonplussed and hesitated to fire at the sacred apparition. Throwing his plank across the moat, he sped across it with a light foot. His hood was drawn over his face and fastened at his mouth so that we could not see his features. As he reached the bank on our side he drew up the brown robe, displaying a pair of officer's boots, and gathering his skirt in his arm, fled down the moat away from the castle and from us.

I left one troop under Captain Ballantine to bivouac in our redoubt, and brought the rest of my men back to camp. There we had a cheerful supper,—all but Terence Dillon, who was fretful and perturbed. After placing a careful guard around the line of our tents, I sought my couch, feeling much spent after the fatigues of the day, and soon sank into a dreamless slumber.





CHAPTER XVII

STORMING THE CASTLE

WHEN the minute arrived at which I had set my mind for awakening, I sprang from my couch, threw a robe over my shoulders, and stepped outside. Willis Fenton was pacing back and forth in front of my tent, and the first red tints in the eastern horizon showed me that the day was about to break on our sleeping camp.

"What o'clock is it, Willis?" I asked.

"About three, Captain," he answered, slackening his measured tread.

"Has anything occurred?"

"Our Scoutmaster, Lieutenant David Potton, hath returned to camp two hours since."

"Praise God for that!" I cried. "Where is he now?"

"In my tent, asleep."

"Let him not be disturbed. Was he in health?"

"In excellent health,—so he told me, Captain."

"I am exceedingly rejoiced to hear this. All else is well?"

"All is well, Captain."

"You have been on guard four hours?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Has there been any stir at the castle?"

"None in my watch."

"Nor in our redoubt?"

"None, Captain."

I returned to my tent and was soon full-dressed. When I again came out the sun had pushed his rim above the ground, and the grey dawn was limned with misty figures. The sentries on the farther edges paced back and forth like creatures of the fog. A minute's time gave them a bolder outline. Then the line of our redoubts appeared, at first indistinct, but soon in clear relief. Then came the faint outline of the castle, the piercing light cutting out its features from the mist as if chiselled from a marble Olympus. Beyond were the everlasting hills clad in summer verdure. On tree and bush the thrush sang, while high above the lark gave his jocund note.

Some of our men were stirring. Rob Cumber and his helpers were already cooking bacon and potatoes. Will Cozens wound his reveille, which was answered from the redoubt, and sounded again from the castle's tower. The sentries gladly abandoned their posts; and the day, with all its tasks of danger and blood, was full upon us.

I pushed in at Willis Fenton's tent and found the Scoutmaster just awake. I grasped his bronzed hand in both of mine, even as I would receive a brother.

"The Lord bless thee, David," I said.

"The Lord bless thee, gallant Captain," he returned, in his fervent but suppressed enthusiasm.

"We have needed thee, David, but to-day more than ever."

"Then I praise God that he hath sent me to your side, Captain."

"How is your wound?" I asked.

"Gone," he said. "It was nothing. I did bleed, some, but I am myself now."

"How came you hither?"

"When I heard of your proposed assault on Ballyrae castle, I begged that I might rejoin you. It was granted. I have ridden hard for eight hours; and here I am."

"But you have not had sleep enough?"

"Abundance, Captain. Thou knowest my habit well. Two hours sleep are two hours too much when the Irish miscreants are in our front."

"You have forgotten nothing of your vengeance, then?" I asked, smiling at his weakness.

His face grew black with the old hate.

"When I forget it let God forget me!" he cried. "If I guess aright, the foul fiend who murdered my wife and child is in yonder castle—Black Murtagh. Let him beware, then, for the Lord will bring us face to face and I shall send him to hell, fear not."

I pitied him, but there was nothing for it, so we walked out to breakfast. Right glad were our men to see the brave Scoutmaster back, and they greeted him with many expressions of joy.

While we were feeding our warriors' stomachs with fighting appetites we observed that which indicated a lack of discipline and order at the castle. The whole of Lord Kilmac's people, men, women, and children, including the twelve hooded monks, seemed to have come on the walls to view us with mingled curiosity and apprehension ere we should renew our attack. Captain Ballantine's troop in the redoubts, being at breakfast like ourselves, engaged the Irish defenders in a spirit of banter, and there was soon an exchange of compliments

between the battlements and the redoubts which comprised threats from our side and defiance and execration from theirs. But there was no sign of fighting on their part, and Lord Kilmac was evidently waiting for me to resume the attack.

At seven o'clock I had my men all back in the redoubt. I discovered that the Irish had filled our breach during the night with broken stone and timbers. But our first guns cleared away the obstruction, and our men yelled with delight when the hole was once more opened and enlarged. I played the cannons upon the jagged breach until we had it wide enough to enter four abreast. This was accomplished by nine o'clock. The line of defenders had disappeared, but I could easily imagine them lurking behind the merlons on the parapet, and at either side of the breach, ready to give us a bloody welcome should we approach the moat.

Our siege guns ceased booming and there was a moment of intense quiet. My men knew the order that was coming, and every Englishman was alert and impatient to hear it. I stepped forward from the close shelter of the redoubt into full view of our whole line, and sang out :

“Prepare to storm !”

I was answered with a shout of delight. pontoons and scaling ladders had long since been got ready. Captain Ballantine had begged me to give him the charging column through the breach, and I had appointed half of his troop, with Lieutenant Hopkins, to follow him. The other half, with Lieutenant Parker, was given to the Scoutmaster, who was to take the wall on the right of the drawbridge. My whole troop, with Lieutenants Haddon and Wilton, was to storm the wall

at the left of the drawbridge on either side of the breach. I directed Lieutenant Percy Waters, with Willoughby's twenty men, to make a diversion on the bastion far around on the right side of the wall, feeling sure that this move would draw off at least a hundred of the defenders from our main assault ; and, for a like purpose, Terence Dillon was commanded to lead his thirty men-at-arms against the left bastion. Twenty pontoons, each carried by four men, and forty ladders tall enough to reach the crenels of the battlements, each carried by two men, were lifted from the ground. Our charging line was quickly formed, with Waters and Dillon on the two ends. Ballantine, with his column behind him in rows of four, held the centre. I came next, on the left, in front of all.

I took in the view of my little army with a deliberate eye. Every detail seemed perfect. With sword in hand I cried out :

“Forward,—double time,—charge !”

There was a loud yell. They chose their own word with tumultuous enthusiasm. It was “Marmaduke, Marmaduke !” We swept out from behind the waggons and redoubts and dashed forward at the moat. The guns of the enemy opened on us from parapet and barbicans. The defenders planted their gonfalons on the wall, and with a shout of defiance stood ready to receive us. But on we went, and when we reached the moat, the bridges were deftly thrown across, our men sped over them, and soon a hundred of them were on the ladders. I planted myself on the middle pontoon where the whole action was open to me, and watched the battle with the keenest interest. The first man to reach the parapet was Willis Fenton, who was shot by Black Murtagh as

he stepped on the wall, and fell back into the moat dead. The first men on six of the ladders met the same fate ; or, if they were not killed by the bullets, they were drowned when they struck the water. With all my lungs I urged them on,—it were death to falter,—and soon they had gained a footing on the wall, and were locked in the embrace of war at the top, shouting, “Marmaduke, Marmaduke !” with the rage of wounded lions. Haddon and Wilton were there now, also, and were giving their swords to the defenders in yeoman fashion. And how the private soldiers fought ! When I saw my gallant fellows facing tremendous odds with so much spirit I longed to be with them on the parapet. Dick Trevor and Tom Bufter were there ; so were Joe Muzzycroft, Hugh Brewer, Loftus Pearson, and Luke Marvin. Rob Cumber, our cook, was sending many a foe to his last account. Will Cozens carried a standard which inspired every English heart. Never had I seen the Ironsides fight so well to the credit of the great General who had trained them. When I had seen my brave troop overcome disaster and carry the main wall in this indomitable way, I looked down the line to see how the fight fared at other points.

Rodney Ballantine had made a brave push at the breach, but Lord Kilmac stood there in person and twice drove back the young leader. Some of Ballantine’s men were wounded and swept into the moat to drown or make their perilous way to the ravelin where they could nurse their wounds. But the third time the column charged it forced its way past the raw soldiers on the inside, until a good stand was made in the front bailey, where a hand-to-hand fight ensued.

David Potton had met with but slight resistance in his

part of the assault. Three or four of his men were shot ; but his leadership was so fierce that his individuality seemed to overawe the Irish and he soon made his way to the battlements, whence he came forward and carried the barbicans with a great slaughter of the enemy. He shot and stabbed with savage delight, and a score of the defenders who opposed his men were half-killed on the wall and then thrown headlong into the moat to drown. When he had beaten down all opposition, I called to him to lower the drawbridge and raise the portcullis, which he at once set about to do.

When I first turned my eyes towards the Scoutmaster, after seeing my own troop carry the main wall, I observed the figure of a new trooper mount a ladder and join in the assault. His upper face was covered with a mask of white silk, but there was a familiar air about him which I strove in vain to identify. He took every chance with the best Englishman there, and many an Irishman fell into the moat from the sword-thrusts which he dealt with an almost insane fury. His boots and buff coat were like those of the Ironsides, yet I could not account for the white mask. But when he followed the Scoutmaster to the drawbridge I could tarry no longer to pierce his mystery.

I now ran down the moat and looked after Waters, who was meeting with poor fortune on the right bastion. Some threescore of the Irish soldiers had been put there, and with them were many of the women and children and the twelve monks, the noncombatants harassing him with various missiles, while the soldiers were distressing his little band by their ill-aimed fire. The monks were themselves throwing stones with extreme malignancy. But the diversion itself had suc-

ceeded as I had wished, for it relieved our main attack of all that rabble. Returning quickly to the gate, I found the drawbridge now down, and passing over, I directed the Scoutmaster to go at once to Waters's relief. He, set off with his men with alacrity, the man in the white mask still at his side, and as soon as he thrust himself into the enemy's ranks there was more bloody work, in which Waters now joined him as quickly as he could get his men upon the wall.

The defenders in front had left the battlements and were all making a last stand in the great bailey, with Lord Kilmac and Black Murtagh directing them. These two leaders were fighting with the courage of despair, but as I looked upon the heaps of slain I rejoiced to note so few of the Ironsides among them. My troopers never relaxed their savage energy a jot, and they were doing a fearful execution on the Irishry, whose imperfect training gave them no chance against men who had never been beaten. I now joined in the fight and strove to cut my way to Lord Kilmac, doing some bloody work in the attempt, when my attention was attracted to the left postern, which I had given to Terence Dillon to assault, and I paused to observe what was going on there.

I saw a white-dressed, graceful figure, which I recognised as Catherine Dillon's, run forward and throw open the gate. Terence and his men entered, and the brother and sister tenderly embraced each other. She then led him to the rear bailey, his men following, and they were lost to my sight at the angle of the keep. When I turned to press in on Lord Kilmac, I found him too far back for me to hope to reach him at present. But the shrieks of the people who were undergoing the attack of the Scoutmaster led me to go thither. I found it high time

to interfere. He had killed all the soldiers at the right bastion, and I was startled to see a row of three bodies hanging on ropes from a beam which he had thrown from the wall to a ledge on the keep. These were two of the twelve brown-frosted monks, besides another in a different habit whose slow revolving face showed me the distorted features of Father O'Brien, the short priest of Carberry Hall. He would meddle no more in martial affairs, for he was stone dead, as were the two others. The insatiate Scoutmaster and his inseparable companion in the white mask were turning their swords upon some of the peasant youths who had not borne arms in the battle, when I sternly bade Potton to strike only at the soldiers, and asked him to follow me to the main engagement. This gave the rabble an opportunity to fly out into the open country, and some fifty of the Irish soldiers ran with them.

When I again reached the middle of the bailey and joined in the clash of arms, I saw a body of thirty horse come out from the left side of the keep, with Catherine, in her white frock, and Terence Dillon riding in front. I at once surmised that Catherine had held her brother and his followers on the outside, in the left bastion, until the battle in front had left her free to act. She had then admitted them through the postern and taken them back to the stables, where all had chosen horses. They now intended, I assumed, to sweep out through the main gate and escape from Lord Kilmac, whose certain defeat was not yet apparent to them.

I pushed in close to the facade and they rode up to me.

"Captain Marmaduke," said Terence, "I have entered the left postern as you directed me to do. I would ask your further pleasure."

"Do as you please," I replied, feeling a jealous pang as I thought that Catherine was willing to leave me without ceremony and perhaps forever. "This castle will be ours very soon. Go or stay according to your desire."

"By your leave, then, we will go," said Terence, whose sulky disposition was again overmastering him. Indeed, I felt that he was anxious to get his beautiful sister away from me as well as from Lord Kilmac.

While we were talking I had failed to watch the fight in the bailey. My men had pressed the Irishry so hard that Lord Kilmac had ordered a retreat into the keep ; and now, with the total remnant of his command numbering only a hundred men, he swept back suddenly and pressed us against the front of the keep. The soldiers and servants from Carberry Hall had had no part in the fight, and were too dull and stiff-necked now to suspect their danger. The half-mad defenders of the castle took no time to distinguish between their countrymen and the English who were driving them backwards. They suddenly thrust their swords through the bodies of some eight or ten of the Carberry Hall men, who died like cowards, without striking a blow. The rest, led by Balor MacLuga and Scollog the piper, spurred their horses away with shrieks of fear. Lord Kilmac, seeing that an escape had been planned, suddenly struck a fearful blow at Terence, cutting through his steel cap and cleaving him to the chin. The young man fell to the earth, dead ; and his sister, springing from her horse with a prolonged shriek of agony, rushed into my embrace and fainted on my breast.

"Make them both prisoners !" cried Lord Kilmac "I have an account to settle with this commander before he dies."

The sun was now at meridian. My men had not missed me and it was doubtful if I could acquaint them with the perilous situation of the young lady and myself. I raised my sword, but Catherine hung so heavily upon me that I could not use it with effect.

"Marmaduke, Marmaduke!" I cried, as loudly as I could.

Lord Kilmac's men were pressing me towards the portal in the centre of the keep, and I was holding tight to my precious burden. My men were harassing the outer ranks of the Irish but had not yet discovered me. Suddenly I heard a shout from a single throat.

"Marmaduke, Marmaduke!"

A horseman dashed across the drawbridge, his scarlet cloak and white plume waving in the wind.

"Marmaduke, Marmaduke!" he cried, riding straight at the Irish.

"I am here!" I shouted, above all the din of the battle. "Marmaduke is here!"

My men heard me; so did the Unknown. There was a great shout, "A rescue, a rescue!" from the Ironsides; and "Marmaduke, Marmaduke!" from the stranger.

But at that moment the portal was opened, and I was thrust through it, holding Catherine in both arms, for my sword was struck away. My fierce captors followed me inside; the door was shut, and I was a prisoner to those who owed me no mercy.





CHAPTER XVIII

THE SCOUTMASTER MEETS HIS MAN

NO sooner were we pushed inside the great citadel, or keep, with a further killing of a score of Lord Kilmac's men in the rear of the routed column, than the Ironsides began to beat a mighty assault on the oaken door of the portal. The Irish leader and his lieutenant, Black Murtagh, were deeply concerned lest it would be immediately battered down, and they began to devise means for reinforcing its strength from the inside.

While their attention was thus engaged, and their wounded and thoroughly demoralised followers were listlessly attempting to carry out the orders which they issued, I seized the moment of panic to inspect my surroundings. I found that we were in a great hall of a two-storied building, with arched roof, which stretched across the bailey nearly to the castle wall on either side. There were no windows in the lower section; no entrance or exit, in fact, save through the front portal which we had used, and a similar one at the rear of the citadel. In the centre of the building were walls, and within them a court giving light and air to the interior apartments. Everywhere, in floor, wall, and ceiling,

was polished oak. At one end of the hall was a stairway leading to the upper story where the living apartments were situated.

It took me but an instant to make this survey. If I could but mount yonder stairway with my fair burden unseen, it would then be an easy matter to communicate with my friends from a window, and their scaling ladders would soon solve my perilous perplexity.

The longer I held the warm but insensible body of the unhappy maiden on my heart, the more firmly did my resolution grow to save her from the death which was designed for us both. Her head was close to mine, the eyes were shut and the full, red lips half-opened. I gazed into her pallid face with a tender wonderment that its freshness and innocence had so enthralled my soul. Her breath met mine. I had never seen a lady in this situation before ; and it gave me a sudden pang to think that possibly the terrors through which she had just passed might snap the fragile thread of her life and rob me of her sweet spirit even while I held her in my arms.

The noise upon the door increased in fury. I surmised that the besiegers had mounted a heavy piece of timber on one of the gun carriages, which they were using as a battering-ram.

"Fire the castle!" cried Lord Kilmac, suddenly, to one who was evidently familiar in his household ; "explode the secret mines ! We will retreat through the rear portal and escape by the hidden passage under the moat at the rear wall. That is our last chance, and I would not give these fellows my house intact. Quick, Cormac, Con, and Dermat,—do you hear?"

The three men were off at once to do his bidding.

While my foes were thus occupied, I suddenly gathered Catherine's feet from the floor and sped up the stairway, her weight oppressing me no more than would an infant's. To my surprise I was followed only by a mocking laugh.

"Ha, ha ! my gallant Captain," shouted Lord Kilmac, "I mean to obtain a partial revenge on you for the blow you struck me the other night, and for the hell of death and destruction which you have brought hither. This castle is now on fire, Captain, ha, ha ! Make free with its apartments, I pray you."

His words were true, for the smoke was already filling the hall. I stood still at the first landing.

"Aye, Captain," he continued, "cling to yonder Irish maiden who hath turned her back on her own country and people for your big, stupid, English hulk. But you will both be in the air in three minutes, along with every stone of this ancient castle. And may you have abundant joy together ere you strike the earth again ! Curse you both !"

Again there was a laugh full of rage and jealousy ;—the gloating of a man beaten down in the adversity of life.

But there was a sudden shout from the windows in the second story. Lord Kilmac heard it and he knew too well that my men had forced an entrance into the keep by using their scaling ladders. "Marmaduke, Marmaduke !" was the cry that resounded from a hundred English throats. I made a movement to ascend the stairs still higher, my object being to get Catherine to the windows where we both might escape from the threatened explosion. Lord Kilmac divined my purpose, and, calling half a dozen of his followers about him, he sprang up the stairs in a passion of hate.

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"You shall not balk me!" he shouted, coming at me with his sword. "If I am not to send you against the sky by my explosion I will spit you both on my blade. There, villain!" He lunged straight at Catherine and the thrust would have pierced us both had I not quickly sprung aside, and, seizing one of his men by the throat with my left hand, drawn him forcibly between us and my antagonist. The man I held drew his dagger and struggled to use it against me, while Lord Kilmac fiercely endeavoured to get another thrust with his sword. With only my left arm free I was in no condition for a fight; already the Irishmen were pressing me at such close quarters that I feared they had injured Catherine.

But as I stood there hopelessly fighting them off and tightening my grip on the throat of the human shield until he hung limp between me and the others, I again heard the familiar war-cry, "Marmaduke, Marmaduke!" It came from a single voice, and I beheld a knightly figure leaping down the stairway to my side.

"There is for you!" he cried, thrusting his sword through the fellow I was holding by the throat. "Down you go!" he shouted, pressing upon Lord Kilmac until the latter lost his balance and fell tumbling down the stairs. The other five Irishmen engaged him on the stairs, but their swords were useless against his skill, and he quickly despatched two of them while the rest fled after Lord Kilmac, who had now disappeared through the secret passage with some of his men.

Then the Unknown turned to me.

"I am glad to find you alive," he said. "Is this the lady whom we engaged to rescue? I pray God she is safe and sound!"

"It is the same, sir," I answered, "and she is both

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safe and sound, I believe. But I beseech you take heed ;—yonder villain lord has but now threatened that he will blow up the castle."

"The idle threat of a knave!" cried the Unknown. "But, upon my life, the castle is on fire! Hey you, there, Lord Kilmac!" he shouted, "I would have it out with you before departing from this adventure!"

But Lord Kilmac was not in sight. The Unknown passed down the stairs and pressed in among the Irish men-at-arms, dealing death right and left in his search for their leader.

"Marmaduke, Marmaduke!" came the cry from a hundred throats as my followers came pouring through the upper windows and swept past me down the stairs.

The smoke was rolling through the great hall in thick clouds so that I could but dimly perceive the fighting host below. But the crash of sword upon sword, the shout of battle-cries, the yells of wounded and maddened combatants, and the last moans or curses of expiring men, told me too plainly the scene that was being enacted beneath me.

"Marmaduke, Marmaduke!" It was the Scoutmaster who swept past me now, and beside him the trooper in the white mask.

The Ironsides were hotly engaged. The Irish were falling around them like stubble. I had no sword; I could only stand and look, and wait for a safe opportunity to lay down my precious burden. But I was not needed in that last carnage.

I heard a man's scream. It was a weird and wild yell of hate, of revenge, of murder. I knew the voice well. It was the Scoutmaster's.

Through the thick atmosphere I saw that the last

Irishman had fallen or fled save only Black Murtagh. The Scoutmaster stood in front of all the English, and for the first time, came suddenly and unexpectedly face to face with his foe.

"At last!" he shrieked, leaning upon his sword in the physical weakness of his great agitation. I could see his gigantic frame shaking as from the palsy.

"At last!" The words came from him on the very top note of his voice and with all the breath that he could give them.

Not an Englishman moved. Every trooper there knew that this was the supreme moment in the Scoutmaster's life, and they all stood back to give him his revenge. Black Murtagh's face was hidden by his beard up to his eyes, but he had a hunted look, and stood with his sword ready for the attack which he expected. And all the time the smoke was increasing in its volume.

The Scoutmaster was regaining his self-control. "Ha," he cried, in a more subdued tone, "at last!"

He raised his sword and advanced his foot; when suddenly the very earth seemed to burst asunder. There was a terrific report as of a thousand thunderbolts rolled into one. The great walls and turrets of the castle swayed and quaked, and then parted almost stone from stone. The air was full of missiles hurled by an unseen force. But the hall in which we stood and the mighty tower beside it escaped the deadly explosion of the mine, except for that part of it where stood the Scoutmaster and his foe. One branch of the mine seemed to run under the wall near which they stood. The great stones were blown outward, making a ragged opening into the bailey, and the postern was forced off its hinges. I carried Catherine to a window and looked out. The Scoutmaster, who had been stunned for a moment, now

saw Black Murtagh walk away through the postern in the hope that there was an opportunity for escape. But in an instant Potton recovered his faculties, and, springing through the doorway, pursued his ancient enemy across the bailey. The Irishman, who had started for the drawbridge, now changed his course and made for the priests' house adjoining the chapel. This house was close to the keep and had a flat roof. The priests' house was on fire, and as Potton entered it below Black Murtagh came out upon the roof and looked around in vain for a way of escape.

In the meantime, as the explosion was now over, and neither that nor the fire had done injury to the great tower, I carried the unconscious figure of Catherine through the upper hall to that quarter and into a chamber where there was a couch. Once there I deposited her upon the bed. There was neither medical man nor any woman about the place to minister to the poor girl's condition; for all the women and children, and the surviving monks had fled out into the country as soon as the defenders had made their final retreat into the citadel. The position was a most embarrassing one for me. All that I could think to do was to wipe her face with a wet cloth, and vary that by chafing her wrists. If I could have found some strong waters I would have given her a draught to set her heart in motion again. But I knew not where to find any; and the failure of my simple methods to relieve her prolonged swoon began to cause me grave alarm.

An unusual commotion outside brought me to the window, where I saw a strange sight. The Ironsides were on the walls, and at the windows, and on the roof of the chapel, all looking toward the priests' house. On the roof of that building were Scoutmaster Potton and

Black Murtagh. The Scoutmaster held a sword in his hand ; the Irishman had lost his in his flight. They were eying each other fiercely, while flames came out of the building on which they stood and threatened soon to consume them both.

“ At last ! ” cried the Scoutmaster again, and so saying he flung his sword far away. “ Now, villain, you shall answer for the lives of my wife and son.”

With the shriek of a wounded panther he sprang upon the Irishman. The action aroused Black Murtagh from his paralysis of fear, and he exerted all his strength to resist the attack. The men were nearly a match for size and strength ; and it was a combat of giants. They were both wearied from the arduous and prolonged battle that had kept them engaged without rest or refreshment for so many hours. But the chances were scarcely equal. The Scoutmaster was surrounded by a friendly army, while the Irish leader was the sole survivor of a conquered host, and even if he prevailed in this duel he was sure to be put to death afterwards. But he grappled the Scoutmaster with the energy of despair.

They clenched in a close embrace, then one tripped the other, and they rolled upon the roof, over and over, tearing, cursing, and each striving for the mastery. Then there was a pause, and Black Murtagh was on top. He tried to clutch the Scoutmaster by the throat, but the Englishman held his wrists in a grip of steel. For several moments they were pictured thus on the burning roof. Then the Scoutmaster made a superhuman exertion and threw his antagonist off. With both on their knees they grappled again ; and now the Scoutmaster struck the other a blow in the face, hard and full on the cheek.

Black Murtagh was staggered, and well he might be by such a blow. It would have killed a slighter man. The Scoutmaster broke away from his grasp and sprang to his feet. The Irishman was likewise quickly erect. For a moment they glared on each other with baleful hate. Then the Scoutmaster sprang upon his foe, and, throwing one arm round his neck, caught the black beard with the other hand, and broke his jaw, until the chin hung upon his breast. The Irishman made a last attempt at his defence. He had his hand on the Scoutmaster's throat ; but his strength was gone.

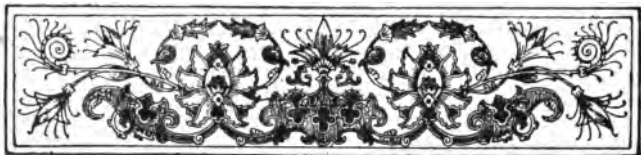
The flames now burst through the roof. The roof must soon fall.

The Scoutmaster once more closed his grip upon his enemy's throat. Black Murtagh's eyes bulged from their sockets. The breath of both men was coming in gasps. The Scoutmaster gave a final wrench at the broken jaw and struck another blow upon the hairy face ; then, raising his antagonist in his arms, he carried him with a great effort to that side of the roof where the conflagration was hottest, and threw him upon the fire. There was a shriek from Black Murtagh as he endeavored to drag his broken body out of the flames. The Scoutmaster thrust him back.

"Ha !" yelled the Scoutmaster, "My wife and child are avenged ! In you go again, you black devil ! You will be well baked by the time you reach hell !"

The roof fell in. There was a mighty roar as the flames shot upward. The Scoutmaster seized the wall and threw himself over the outside. A ladder was thrown up near him, and he came down, crying like an infant, and fainted the moment his feet touched the ground.

He had settled his account with Black Murtagh.



CHAPTER XIX

LOVE AND PREJUDICE

HEARING a deep-drawn sigh from the couch, I turned and saw Catherine attempting to rise. Being much weakened by the terrible ordeal through which she had passed, she was unable to regain her feet without assistance. I flew to her side and supported her as she arose. Her glance swept round the room in a terrified way and then sought my face with a melancholy that touched me to the soul.

"You are ill," I said.

"Is he dead?" she asked, tremulously.

"Alas, yes," I answered.

There was no outcry, but her face wore an anguish which was more pitiable than anything I had ever seen in my acquaintance with human woe.

"Brother, father, mother, friends, and servants,—they are all dead?" she demanded, as if she would fain be contradicted.

"Some of your servants escaped; the others—" I could not finish.

"What was done with—with his murderer?" The question came in a hard, dry tone that was quite unlike her.

"He was attacked by Prince Rupert," I told her, "but escaped, I think."

"And the other one?"

"Black Murtagh?—he was slain by my Scoutmaster."

"What of the garrison?"

"Some hundred escaped, the rest were killed."

"Were the women and children slain,—and the monks?"

"Two of the monks, and O'Brien,—in the heat of the action,—yes. All the rest were spared."

"Do you know aught of my maid, Nora?"

"Nothing, though I assume that she fled with the other women."

"And I alone am here," she cried. "O Heaven! What is to become of me? Mother of God, why hast thou permitted this desolation to fall on a hapless maid?"

She covered her face with her hands and burst into a fit of sobbing that seemed to rack her frame.

Her grief was of a kind that I had never seen before. I have already said that she was unable to stand without support. Now, when she was crying so passionately in her forsaken situation, my heart went out to her even as to a stricken child. I gathered my arms round her and drew her head to a refuge on my breast. The great sobs followed each other so swiftly that she was in a torrent of passion for some moments. When the fountains of her sorrow had spent themselves, she sighed like a broken thing.

"Catherine," I said, "your situation is indeed melancholy. But you are not quite alone. It is Heaven that has thrown us together thus. God has willed that it shall be so, or He would not have placed you in my keeping,—I, the only man in all Ireland who can give you a shelter now."

The sobbing came again. Again I waited for the calm.

"I cannot but believe," I said, "but that our destinies have brought us face to face in a woe so deep that your own life is wellnigh engulfed. I love you more than ambition, or the joy of victory, or the world, or life itself, or anything save honour."

"What are you saying?" she cried. "Your speech is madness! Your hands are red with the blood of my countrymen. Your followers have slain my father and those of my household. Your coming hither made it possible for my brother to meet a violent death. Are you not the destroyer of both my home and my family?"

"I think not," I said. "But even if I am, I am but the instrument of war, an impersonal quantity, and no more to be held responsible for any act of war than every other English soldier,—nay,—than every other Englishman, than the Parliament of England itself. As a soldier I do but obey the will of a superior authority. As a man I speak to you from my own heart."

"It is impossible," she said. "Race, country, and religion are against it."

"What is race, or country, or religion?" I demanded. "In the light of love are they not merely verbal distinctions?"

"It is impossible," she said again. "I know not by what dispensation of Providence you have first wounded me and then seemed to heal me;—first struck at my home and then come as the only friend on the wide earth to offer me another. This is beyond my understanding. But it is impossible;—what you propose can never be. You and I do not worship the same God."

"Nay, Catherine, all things change before love. What

are forms and ceremonies compared to the divine spirit itself, which knows neither form nor ceremony, but only truth ? ”

“ You are a specious reasoner,” she said, looking up into my eyes.

“ But what have reasons to do with us ? ” I asked. “ If there be fallacy in my argument there can be none in my love. And still and ever and always, I love thee ! ”

“ I will not hear more,—I will not listen ! ” she said, and never moved from my heart.

But Nora, her maid, entered the apartment at that moment, looking frightened and dishevelled. I helped Catherine to a chair.

“ Nora,” said I, “ your mistress is ill. Look well after her comfort. I will return anon.”

Then, with a lingering look at Catherine, whose eyes were not upon me, I hurried from the room.





CHAPTER XX

THE MAN IN THE WHITE MASK

I PASSED through the smoke-filled corridors of the old castle and out into the bailey ; and there I stood transfixed by the scene that met my eyes.

The great keep, or citadel, was a prey to devouring flames. The massive structure was already nearly consumed excepting the tower which rose high in an invulnerable majesty that resisted the destroying element. Out of every window of the main building the curling fire spit its red tongues. Dense volumes of smoking clouds rolled up against the clear sky. The roof gave way and the rafters of Irish oak fell crashing within the walls until they shook the ground. The pent flames leapt high out of their confines, and, with a sullen roar, hurled ruin upon the noblest monument of a former age. The very stones seemed to melt before the energy of the heat. Coping, and lintel, and pilaster split and crumbled ; and then the great facade was rent from top to bottom, and, after first pulling apart down the middle, it fell back upon the conflagration in final doom.

The surrounding buildings were attacked by the same grim fate. The chapel and priests' house were already destroyed. The stable and soldiers' quarters were aflame.

Of all that stately pile that had this morning reared itself against the hillside to mark the pride and power of man, nothing would stand when the sun went down save only one tower and the outer walls. The castle which it had taken a hundred years to build as the expression of man's taste and wealth and security, had fallen before human vengeance in one hour.

The Ironsides had led the horses from the stables beyond the outer walls, and they themselves were nearly all on the far side of the moat at dinner. Some were still on guard within the bailey, and there were sentries at certain outposts even when victory seemed to have overcome the last foe. For our discipline was such that it might be said of us that we never slept.

The heat soon became so intense that I sent Lieutenant Haddon to the tower to escort Catherine and her maid to a more comfortable quarter. This officer was a discreet and respectful man, who had daughters of his own, and I thought it well not to go too far just yet in the expression of personal devotion toward the bereaved maiden.

Accordingly, Haddon soon appeared, and, greatly to my surprise, Catherine was leaning on his arm. She looked refreshed from the attention that her maid had given her, and as they passed me I bowed and asked my subordinate to place them for the present in the barbi-can overlooking the drawbridge, and to send them food. To Catherine I said that other arrangements for her comfort would be made presently ; at which she bowed and passed on. Again was I impressed with the utter desolation of her position.

After taking food myself, of which I felt sore need, for it was now two o'clock, and I had eaten nothing

since early morning, I passed among my men to learn how they had fared in the battle. They were in cheerful spirits, and, having now full stomachs, were ready for further contention in the cause of Zion. There being no foe, however, in the flesh, they fell to in the spirit, and were soon wrapped in argument, or hanging upon exhortation, in varied and picturesque groups.

A few tents had been brought up from the camp, and into one of these the Scoutmaster had been laid in great exhaustion after his contest with Black Murtagh. Others of our wounded were in other tents, and everything that the skill of our surgeons could devise was being done to ease their pain. Kind hands had carried food to all who could not get it for themselves. Some of the non-combatants of Ballyrae,—the old men, women and children, and the monks,—who had fled affrighted when the Scoutmaster carried the wall, were slowly returning to the vicinity to gaze with curious horror on the destruction of the castle. But our pickets kept them from any familiar mingling with our party, the temper on both sides being such that I deemed it prudent for their own welfare to keep them at a distance.

I found that the most fatal period of the battle for our side was at the beginning of the assault when we had met such stout resistance in carrying the walls. But I could not find that more than ten of my men had been slain, all told. These had long since been gathered from the moat and ranged side by side under the shade of a tree and covered with tent-cloth. Six or eight troopers had been shot or run through so that they would be in the hospital for a greater or less time to come. Many more had been slashed or had their heads broken from gun-buts, but most of these had tied up

their wounds and refused to be accounted sick. Wherever I went there was good cheer and the hearty spirit of a notable victory.

I made inquiry for the Unknown, but no one had seen him after his encounter with the defenders in the search for Lord Kilmac. He had come upon the scene with the meteor-like heroism which was characteristic of him, and had disappeared just as suddenly, leaving in every eye his picture in flowing scarlet cloak, white plume, and flashing sword.

I also asked after the trooper-in-the-white-mask who had fought so gallantly all day beside the Scoutmaster. Richard Trevor thought he had seen him stricken down when the Irish made their last stand inside the castle, after Lord Kilmac's flight. If this were true, his corpse was doubtless undergoing incineration with the others.

And what a horror was this fate that had fallen on the defenders ! Nearly three fourths of them were dead, and the bailey was not only strewn, but piled thick with their bodies. Behind the walls and across the yard they lay, just as our men had slain them. Before the postern in the keep was a great heap of them, together with the Carberry Hall men whom they themselves had killed. Inside the chapel, in the priests' house, and especially in the ruined castle, were company upon company of men whose mortal remains were fast consuming in the flaming pyres. The heat from the fire was so intense that the corpses outside the burning buildings were twisting and writhing as if in a second death. The air was laden with the heavy odour that was inseparable from such an episode. Here were the cruelties of war as I had never seen them before ; and I could not

shut my ears to the voice of conscience asking whether even the Parliament's commission gave me the right to inflict this ruthless death upon my fellow-creatures.

Almost overcome with physical sickness, I turned to pass over the drawbridge and get away from the horrid scene. I had nearly reached the gate when I saw the figure of an English trooper tottering, indeed half-crawling, toward the same exit. I hastened to his assistance, and discovered to my amasement that he wore a white mask. He was sorely wounded, and when I had got him to the counterscarp he sank down beside the drawbridge, unable to walk across it. In the barbican just above us were Catherine and her maid, and they were looking upon us from the aperture.

Observing that the trooper had fainted, I tore off his white mask, and was astounded to recognise in the pinched and shrunken face my dishonoured associate, Lieutenant Thornton Willoughby. The wall protected us alike from the fire and the sun ; and, placing his head on a tuft of grass, I dipped my hand into the moat and cooled the fever on his brow. My ministrations soon restored him to consciousness, whereupon, seeing that he was dying, I took his head in my arms, for I loved the youth.

"Marmaduke," he said faintly, "I was mad,—I was mad."

His eyes closed again from sheer weakness ; then he looked up at me, and continued :

"It was so hard to get here. I was stricken down beside the Scoutmaster—and a part of the building fell across me in the explosion. I crept out to die among my old comrades. You would—would not have me roasted there alive,—even me, Marmaduke?"

"God bless you, Willoughby!" I cried, with brimming eyes.

"Oh, Marmaduke," he said, "you don't know the insanity of hopeless love! I loved—her—the moment I saw her. She scorned me—and I thought to win her favour by aiding her brother and the priest to escape from Carberry Hall. As God is my judge, I meant no harm to the Parliament's cause. When I saw my treachery condemned in the lightning of your eyes, I fled—not knowing whither—but only to get away from the withering reproach of your glance. I was captured by the Irish and brought here. Last night I put on a monk's garb and sought death from yonder tower. She—dissuaded me, and I then told—her—I would fight in your army as a private soldier, and die—helping the cause I had dishonoured. I did fight,—Marmaduke, did you see me fighting?"

"Yes; the whole army saw you at the Scoutmaster's side all day."

"Thank God for those words, Marmaduke. Oh, I tried so hard to redeem myself. No use,—no use,—it is dishonour—dishonour!"

"Courage and repentance are not dishonour, Willoughby."

"I know the laws of honour, Marmaduke," he answered. "One moment of insane treason cannot be expunged by a century of valour. But it is hard,—oh, it is hard!"

In the anguish of the soul the poor youth had forgotten his bodily pain. The hot tears were in his eyes. I held him closer in my arms, and racked my brain for casuistries that might comfort his dying moments.

"What you did, Willoughby," I said, "has turned out

for the Parliament's good. Your bravery in the battle bore down all opposition. Even the Scoutmaster would have had a much severer task had you not been beside him in the thickest fighting."

"Heaven bless you for those words, Marmaduke," he cried, fervently. "You are a true Englishman,—your soul is of that chivalry which was ever my own ideal of manly honour. But Cromwell—he has given me his hand many a time—what will Cromwell say?"

"He is ever tender with the frailties of men," I said. "None hath a softer heart for those erring or afflicted. I swear to tell him your story, and the world shall know of the knightly valour of your death."

"And dost thou think, Marmaduke, that dying thus after some measure of atonement—that England will forgive my fault?"

"Yea, Willoughby, even as I believe that England loves all her soldiers, and forgets their errors when they fight her battles and destroy her foes as thou hast done this day."

"Oh, Marmaduke, I would rather burn forever in yonder flame, or in the fire of hell of which it is typical, than have my countrymen remember me in infamy."

"A fault should never be measured but by its intention, Willoughby, and thy intention was but to aid a helpless girl. This is nothing more than an indiscretion of youth, against which England will cherish no evil memory in contemplating thy good record of a soldier's life."

"I bless God," said he, as the film of death gathered in his eyes, "that He hath given me into thy arms to die." The poor youth's life was ebbing fast, and I felt

the tears ploughing down my dirt-stained face as his breath came with fading suspirations. "Tell my story to Old Noll as thou hast promised,—tell them in England that our whole army saw me fighting—beside the Scoutmaster—you told me they did—give my love to my mother—O! this pain!—Marmaduke, thou hast really forgiven me?"

"Yes, Willoughby, and Christ loves such as thou art!"

"Then,—fare thee well—good Captain—hold me tighter to thy heart, Marmaduke!—Closer! All is dark!—Closer, Marmaduke!"

And so the poor youth died, and England never had a braver heart.





CHAPTER XXI

AFTER THE BATTLE

I ORDERED the bodies of our ten troopers buried beside the scene of their fatal victory, and with them we interred the corpse of poor Thornton Wiloughby.

I sent my men to recover the body of Terence Dillon, which they brought away much disfigured by the extreme heat. It was then wrapped in tent-cloth and laid in one of the waggons.

While these orders were receiving the attention of my men, I withdrew to my tent, which had been set up close by, and penned a letter to General Cromwell, giving him a full report of our adventures in connection with the siege and capture of the castle. I told him that, after we had overcome the garrison, the ancient stronghold had been fired by the act of the owner in exploding a secret mine which had destroyed it beyond rehabilitation. It could not again, I said, be used as a hostile seat, and I recommended its abandonment as a permanent ruin. With the victory just won I held that we had stricken down the last considerable native force, save the regular troops of the main Irish army. I advised the General that I would send this despatch to

him by the hand of Captain Rodney Ballantine, with his full troop of one hundred horse, who would doubtless be needed in the active operations which were contemplated at the front. This would leave me, I reminded him, the thirty English troopers whom I had left at Carberry Hall, besides my own brave troop, whose effective force of one hundred, after allowances for killed and wounded, would be a little more than normal by adding the twenty men still with me under Lieutenant Percy Waters. I said that I would hold my troop at Ballyrae until I could receive an expression of his wishes, and would, in the meantime, keep the line of communication open between Ballyrae and Carberry Hall.

When in the act of sealing my letter I looked up and saw the tall form of the Scoutmaster enter the door. He seemed spent, and his face wore a look of deep melancholy. Drawing a heavy sigh he threw himself wearily upon a camp chest.

"How do you feel by this time, David?" I inquired.

"Somewhat restored physically," he answered, "but sick nigh unto death in mind and heart."

I instantly read his secret. His long-sought vengeance had not brought him the exhilaration that he had expected, while the death of his foe left him now without the motive which had moved him to action for so many years. Perhaps, too, the fact that he had really fought for private revenge instead of for his country's welfare was doing its work in his conscience.

"Be of good cheer, David," I said. "We have all won a notable victory to-day, which I have just reported here to our General, not forgetting to mention your valour."

"You are ever too considerate of us, Captain," he replied. "We would have done ill in this enterprise without your leadership. But to tell you the truth, Captain, I am tired of the game ; it seems no longer worth the candle. Indeed, I have felt a great change in my feelings since—since I killed him. The desolation of my life is too great to bear now. I never wept for my wife and boy until after yonder ruffian had gone to hell,—never shed a tear in all these years, Captain, until to-day. What have you got for me to do after this?"

"We have had action enough the past few days," I said ; "surely a season of quiet and rest would not go amiss?"

"I would rot at that, Captain," he returned. "Give me a mission where odds are to be met ;—let me have a last brush with them three to one, where I may bid the Papists a farewell worthy of an English trooper, and then die fighting them. Give me something of this kind to do, Captain, but keep me not here in idleness, I beseech you."

The thought of Catherine and of her oath to kill this man for her father's death came into my mind at this moment, and it seemed to be the part of discretion to send the Scoutmaster away, at least for the present.

"David," I said, "I think I can give you active work which will delight you, although I hope you will come to no extremity such as you have just suggested. This message to our General I had intended to send by the hand of Captain Ballantine ; but you are of my own troop and entitled to precedence in such an errand. You may carry it to General Cromwell, going to him with Captain Ballantine and his troop. Once with the

army you may remain there or return here as the General may order it. If you remain there you will doubtless have war to your heart's content. Do you wish to go ?”

His face beamed with gratification.

“Of course I accept your offer,” he said. “Once with Old Noll, and face to face with an army of the Papists, it will be an easy matter to find the death I now yearn for. When shall we start, Captain ?”

“At once,” I answered. “I told Captain Ballantine an hour ago that he was to march after our main army as soon as he and his men could obtain rest and refreshment. He told me he would be ready at three o'clock. It is that hour now. Are you prepared ?”

“As soon as I can mount my horse,” replied the Scoutmaster, vanishing with the words.

I took my letter outside and found Ballantine's troop in the saddle, ready to move. Their Captain was at the front. The Scoutmaster dashed up on his horse, and I gave him the letter to General Cromwell. Ballantine saluted me, then made a sign, and the trumpeter sounded a note. In an instant the troopers were off, a farewell cheer following them from those left behind.

As soon as they had disappeared down the road leading off through the southern hills, I directed my steps toward the barbican over the gateway, and came face to face with Catherine. She had been weeping, and after raising her eyes to mine as I entered the small apartment where she sat with Nora, she looked again out of the aperture.

“Madam,” I said, “I have come to propose your return to your own home.”

“My own home,—alas !” she sighed.

“There is no chance for your comfort here,” I con-

tinued, "this place being wholly in ruins. At Carberry Hall there are——."

"Who?" she asked, with trembling voice.

"Your servants and Father Terhune," I replied. "Some twenty survivors of your brother's guard will go with you from here, besides a sufficient escort of English soldiers. There are also thirty Englishmen now at Carberry Hall. Lieutenant Waters will go there in charge, and your safety will be amply guarded."

For the first time she looked up.

"And you?" she asked. "What will you do?"

"I shall remain here for the present," I replied.

Again she looked away. Then, with an effort, she asked:

"What of my—my brother?"

"I have had his remains placed in a camp waggon which will follow you to Carberry Hall," I said.

Her weeping burst out afresh, but in a moment she had calmed herself, and asked:

"When do you wish me to go?"

"I think you had better start at once," I replied, "so that you will reach your—home—before dark."

"I am ready," she said, wearily; and she and Nora followed me down the stone stairs on the inside of the wall and across the drawbridge, the lady refusing my offer of assistance.

Catherine's grief was now impenetrable, even to sympathy like mine. I therefore gathered together as her escort the twenty surviving men-at-arms from Carberry Hall, choosing Balor MacLuga for their chief, and twenty others from the English soldiers, placing them all in charge of Lieutenant Percy Waters. I gave that officer specific instructions for the care of Carberry Hall, telling him to keep a lookout to sea for hostile ships, and

to send report to me each day of his state until he saw me again. The cavalcade then started off for Carberry Hall, Catherine mounted on her black horse and riding away without giving me even a glance of farewell. In the rear were a part of our camp waggons, the last one containing the body of Catherine's brother.

As they faded from sight I felt a chilling sense of chagrin at the indifference that the lady had shown me. Then came a process of introspection in which all the incidents of my acquaintance with Catherine passed rapidly through my mind. I thought of the declaration of love that I had made her, and then I wondered what my mother would think,—what she would say, if she could learn the secret of my heart. In what manner would she look upon this Catholic Irish lady who had so deeply impressed me? Would she give her consent to the participation of her son, an English Puritan, in such an alliance? How much disappointment it would cause her, I thought, to finally abandon her cherished hope for my marriage with Lady Betty Forrester, the English girl with golden hair. What, too, would be the thought of my military associates if I should press a suit with one against whose race and religion there was so much prejudice? Would they not condemn me as yielding principle to sentiment and conscience to passion? What would that great soldier say,—he on whose good opinion my whole welfare rested,—should I link my life with one who, though pure and above reproach, was an innocent part of a system for which he cherished the deepest hostility? Then I thought of the sensation which had made my heart throb fast and faster when I held her in my arms that day. I thought of the tender pity with which her sorrows filled my soul. I thought

of her youth in its beauty and bloom ; and I vowed to myself that I could give up ambition and the world if she would give me her love instead.

I took another view of the burning keep. The fire was still full of energy, but it had nearly done its work. The walls of the citadel had fallen in a mass of ruins, only a broken portion of the architecture here and there still marking the recent grandeur of the design. The pestilent vapours of the place were fast increasing their noxious influences. The feudal fortress which had stood for power and strength that morning was now a smoking charnel for its dead defenders and a poisoned menace against its living captors. I therefore drew back all my men to the camp where we had passed the previous night ; and there we tarried for one week waiting for an answer to my letter to the General. Word came to me every day from Lieutenant Waters at Carberry Hall, reporting everything in good condition. I was informed that Terence Dillon had been buried, but not a word was said to me of Catherine.

When the days had sped into September and no instructions reached me from the General, I determined to abandon our post at Ballyrae and return to Carberry Hall. First, however, I laid a mine under the great front wall for half its distance on either side of the portcullis, using up much of my powder to secure the necessary force. When all was in readiness the fuse was lit, all retired in haste, and soon there was the noise of earthquakes and thunderbolts. The wall was dismembered and shot upwards in fragments. Its barbicans and turrets, its sally-ports and drawbridge, its portcullis and parapets, its merlons and crenels were reduced to their original condition of mortar and stone. The disin-

tegrated battlements filled the air for a mile around ; and by this act I made the rehabilitation of Ballyrae Castle against the peace and dignity of the English Parliament forever impossible.

We had taken the castle on a Tuesday. On Wednesday of the following week I set out for Carberry Hall at the head of my troop. My men were glad enough at the prospect of the comfortable quarters of the Dillon mansion in exchange for the tents in which we had been sleeping.

We pressed on over the hills and past a beautiful lake of water, and at noon came in sight of Carberry Hall. Beyond lay the sea and a ship at anchor in the harbour. The Parliament ensign was floating from her mast and I judged that she had arrived in the last hour, or a courier would have been sent to me. I wondered what her mission could be in this southern spot, our chief operations being now in progress farther north. I pushed Dick into a quicker pace and rode ahead. As I reached the gate in front of the house Lieutenant Waters and the garrison gave me a cheer from the walls. Catherine stood on the step dressed in black and looking toward me with keen interest. Beside her were two ladies whose features I did not immediately discern. Spurring my horse round the road I drew his bridle at the door and sprang out of my saddle. The eldest of the two strangers advanced and caught me in her arms. It was my mother. I tenderly embraced and kissed her, and then, raising my eyes, I beheld Lady Betty Forrester smiling at me in golden beauty. I took both her hands in mine and expressed my joy at meeting her so unexpectedly. I then bowed to Catherine, who barely lowered her eyes in acknowledgment of my salute.



CHAPTER XXII

LORD ALFRED .

MY troop of horse shortly rode into the yard and soon had their horses stabled and themselves at dinner.

In the meantime, my situation was not free from embarrassment. I was the master of this house by the right of conquest, but there was a finer distinction that was not lost to my mind. Catherine Dillon was the sole owner of Carberry Hall and its thousand acres outlying. Here were two members of my family come suddenly to claim the hospitality of the place. Under the usages of war I would have given no thought to the rights of the owner. But the circumstances of my intercourse with Catherine made it impossible for me to avoid a sense of humiliation at thus quartering by force upon her bounty not only my soldiers, for whose presence I had no apologies to make, but my mother and her friend, whose unexpected arrival was scarcely a usual incident of war.

While I stood at the door exchanging the ordinary greetings of such a meeting, Catherine divined the thought that was in my mind.

"Captain Marmaduke," she said, with a stately dignity which gave her at once the indisputable authority of

mistress, "I pray you, make these ladies welcome to my house and all it contains. Will you not lead them within? My servants will look after their comfort as well as may be in view of the natural inconveniences of these times."

It was spoken with the air of a queen, and there was no gainsaying it. We all bowed and passed inside to the great living room.

I quickly observed with much surprise that Catherine had in fact resumed her position of mistress of the house. The Irish servants were at their accustomed places within. Nora took the ladies' wraps. Grania, the house-keeper, moved about the rooms with a slow and cumbersome importance. Scollog was near with his bagpipes. Balor MacLuga, light and active, and the best trained of the Irish men-at-arms, seemed to have been made butler; and he was followed about by Finn and Oscar, two youths, who gave prompt obedience to his commands. In short, Catherine had employed the interval since her return home to restore a semblance of discipline and order to her establishment, which had been made possible by Lieutenant Waters's respectful consideration of her position.

When I was alone with my mother and Lady Betty we renewed our greetings, and then I asked them for an explanation of the causes that had given me the happiness of their visit.

"You must know, then, my dear son," said my mother, as I seated myself beside her and stroked her hand, "that General Cromwell recently sent to England for reinforcements. When these troops marched through Yorkshire there were several ladies of the first families coming with them to Dublin in the hope of seeing long-

absent officers. The time seemed auspicious for me to join them and come to you, if the Lord would permit. Arrived at Dublin I learned that you had been severely wounded——."

"A mere scratch, dear mother," I interrupted, with a guilty blush.

"The young lady outside, to whom I made this my first question," replied my mother, "told me the wound had entirely healed, for which I bless God. But the report at Dublin was that you were in a serious condition. I therefore prevailed upon the English Council at Dublin, after our troops had debarked, to send the ship hither that I might give you a mother's loving care in your extremity. How happy I am, my dear son, to find you in health and victory!"

My mother kissed me with glad affection, and I told her that God had been very gracious to spare my life through many perils.

"Lady Betty, you were very good to accompany my mother," I said.

"I have come into a strange and romantic country," she replied. "I find it full of interest."

"But it is a land hostile to England," I said. "Are you not afraid of its dangers?"

"I have been too well surrounded by brave soldiers to feel a sense of fear. Who could be afraid with the Ironsides near?" she asked, with a smiling favour that charmed me.

I had many questions to ask of my mother and Lady Betty concerning our home in Yorkshire, and they had much to tell me. They told me of our neighbours and friends,—many, alas, of the friends were now turned enemies. They also described the growing settlement

throughout England of the Parliament's authority, and of the great weight among all the people of General Cromwell's name. Better times soon to come were looked for under the sway of the Commonwealth.

"Above all, my dear son," said my mother, with tears in her eyes, "I hope, in the Lord's providence, that you will ere long be freed from your soldier's calling, so that you may be restored to your own fireside and to the peace that awaits you there!"

Her eyes involuntarily fell upon Lady Betty, who was toying with her fan.

Dick Trevor entered the room and informed me that Lord Alfred Paddleford was without and desired to pay his compliments.

"Oh," cried my mother, "I had forgotten to tell you. He is the commander of the Parliament's ship. Have you met him recently?"

"No, mother, not since our romping games in the old Yorkshire days. But I shall be glad to renew the acquaintance. Bid him enter, Trevor."

I rose to meet him and we grasped hands heartily. He was tall and fair, with a soldier's air,—or perhaps I should say, a sailor's—and younger by a year or two than I. He bowed to the ladies, and seized my hand with a hearty, laughing air that made me love him. We talked of our former youthful sports, and he dwelt on the part that Lady Betty had played in them, bringing many a smile, and sometimes a blush, into her face. She met his banter with playful retort, and then, after he had given me some commonplace details of the navy work, he walked aside with Lady Betty, and they were soon conversing in a happy intimacy.

Balor MacLuga appeared in the room at this moment

and said that his mistress begged us to come to dinner in the banqueting hall. Being all hungry, we passed out with alacrity, Scolog leading the procession with the music of his pipes.

As we entered the great dining room I saw Catherine Dillon standing at the head of the table. Beside her, at the next chair, stood Father Terhune. She bowed to each of us with decorous politeness and indicated the place where each was to sit, my chair being the one next to Father Terhune. Next to me she placed my mother, and next to my mother Lord Alfred Paddleford, and then Lady Betty. As we seated ourselves I was quick to observe a look of her eyes toward the priest which restrained him from speaking his grace before meat. He did make the sign of the cross on his breast, but without attracting the attention of either of those of my party.

The two girls formed a striking contrast as we began our meal. They were of the same age, just over twenty. Lady Betty was fair and slender and of medium height. Catherine was dark, with more plumpness of form, and taller. One had hair of shining gold ; the other had tumbling locks of brown. Lady Betty's eyes were blue and soft ; Catherine's were brown and full of life. The English girl had cheeks of mingled peach and cream ; the Irish girl had the richer red of her western type. Lady Betty wore a dimpled smile of amiability which knew nothing of fretfulness ; Catherine's lips could smile or frown according to her mood. Each had youth, beauty, and health ; but in one was the dove, while in the other was the eagle.

Finn and Oscar brought in many covered dishes which they delivered to Balor MacLuga at a side table, and

then a roast of lamb on a huge platter. Balor filled our plates with the smoking and succulent viands. There was a cut of lamb, and afterwards a joint of roasted ptarmigan on each plate. There were artichokes, cauliflower, and potatoes ; some sweet marmalade ; and a pudding. And all of these we ate with travellers' appetites. There was rare old wine for those who loved it, besides much sweet milch. It was a feast for hungry men and women, and we discussed it with unflagging zeal for one hour.

With an abundance of good things to eat and drink, the restraint with which we had begun the meal soon yielded to cordial fellowship. Catherine relaxed her reserve of manner and led the conversation with intelligence and affability. The subject of the war, with its battles and sieges, was carefully avoided ; and she asked many questions concerning England, its climate and its social customs, which my mother and Lady Betty answered with vivacious information. Lord Alfred, too, took part with much good humour. Now and then the priest addressed a learned observation to me, to which I replied as wisely as I could. If our table-talk was not merry, neither were we companions to owls.

My mother spoke of returning in the ship to Dublin, and thence home. Catherine politely expressed a hope that she and Lady Betty would not hasten their departure until they had discharged their visit to me. Through the whole conversation Catherine had never addressed a word to me, nor had she given me a look. My mother thanked her, but said that as she had found me in good health she would not prolong her stay beyond a few days lest she might interfere with my duties. I answered

that my post was at Carberry Hall for some little time yet, so far as I knew to the contrary, and I would be rejoiced to have her remain as long as her own convenience and the hospitality of our gracious hostess would make her visit agreeable. Lord Alfred said that a day or two made no difference in so far as his ship was concerned. The moment of her departure was thus left indefinite and Catherine proposed to take them for a ride after dinner and show them the country beyond her house.

Accordingly, when a sufficient repose had satisfied digestion, horses were brought and we all mounted. Lord Alfred of course accompanied us, and I bade a half-score of my tall fellows ride a hundred yards behind in case emergency might require their aid.

Catherine and my mother rode beside Lord Alfred in front, while I followed with Lady Betty. We were both in high spirits and the pretty girl was soon recounting innocent experiences with a merry humour that kept us in laughter. This did not please Catherine, who looked backward at every turn of the road and seemed to wonder at my fast friendship for my companion. But she made an effort to entertain my mother and Lord Alfred, and doubtless succeeded, for they appeared to be much interested in her conversation.

A ride of three miles brought us to the broad lake of which I have already spoken. It spread out before us in a blue expanse and was jugged by a rocky wall on its far shore. On the farther side was a tiny boat with a single sail, moored to the bank, and bobbing lazily on the lapping waves. We halted our horses at the water's edge, and Lady Betty burst into enthusiastic praise of the beauty of the scene.

"Surely, Miss Dillon," she cried, "there is a legend

wrapped up in this surpassing spot,—an ancient romance that will ravish the mind,—is there not ? ”

“ It has, indeed, a story,” replied Catherine, smiling at the insistent ardour of the English girl, “ but it will not delight you, for it is a tale of deep melancholy, and I would fain not blight your spirits by relating it.”

My mother said that a legend of Ireland would have a special charm when told at the place of its origin. Lord Alfred and I insisted on hearing it, and Lady Betty pleaded so prettily for it that Catherine consented to narrate the story ; and she told it with charm and spirit.

We dismounted from our horses, which were taken in charge by the troopers, and sat down on the green border of the lake.

“ My legend,” said Catherine, “ is called, ‘ The Fate of the Children of Lir.’ ”

“ A long, long time ago,” she began, “ when Bove Derg was King of Erin, Lir of Shee Finnaha had four beautiful children, who were named Finola, Aed, Ficra, and Conn.

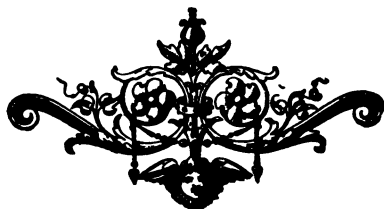
“ But, alas ! The children had a stepmother, who soon became jealous of them and grew to hate them. So one day she brought them to this lake of Darvra, and, by touching them with a magic wand, she changed them into four beautiful white swans, who, however, retained their reason and their human voices, by which they were enabled to sing sweet songs.

“ When Lir heard of this treachery, he struck the wicked stepmother with a magic wand, and she became a demon of the air forever.

“ When a long period of years had gone by, the four swans felt persuaded that their deliverance was near. So they lifted themselves out of this lake, and went to

Saint Patrick, and told him they were the children of Lir. The good father made the sign of the cross upon them, when suddenly their white, feathery robes faded and disappeared, and they regained their human shape, Finola being transformed into a decrepit old woman, and the three sons into wasted old men, all being white haired, bony, and wrinkled.

“Finola called upon the prophet to baptise them quickly for they were about to die. Saint Patrick did this, and then Finola asked that they should be buried in one grave. Then they fell to the earth and expired. The prophet, looking up, beheld a vision of four beautiful little children with happy faces going up to Heaven ; and he buried the old, weary bodies in one grave, as Finola had requested, weeping as he did so for the manifold sufferings through which the children of Lir had passed to their final happiness.”





CHAPTER XXIII

THE HERMIT OF THE LAKE

WHILE we sat looking with varied emotions upon the scene of this sorrowful legend I caught sight of an object that caused me to spring to my feet with apprehension. The others beheld my look of anxiety, and they, too, were quickly upright.

Winding its way around the edge of the lake from the rocks on the far side which had until now concealed its approach was a group of riders about twenty in number. They were coming toward us, but at a slow gait which gave them opportunity to study our numbers and condition. I called my men to horse, and directed the women to retire behind a great rock where they would be safe from any sudden shot from an enemy. I then caused my troopers to ride in and out behind this rock so that their numbers might not easily be guessed by the interlopers. This ruse was successful, for when the others had come within a quarter of a mile of our position they halted, except their leader, who came nearer with much caution until he was but a furlong away.

He suddenly seemed to recognise me, and at the same instant I made out the well-known features of Lord Kilmac. The Irish renegade was in no haste to try con-

clusions with me again, for he turned his horse and galloped back to his men at full speed. Once there he appeared to speak a few words to them, looking back in our direction ; and then they all made haste to return to the shelter of the rocks across the lake, and soon we could see them no more.

I rode behind the shelter on our side to speak a word of assurance to our women, but paused when I beheld Catherine trembling and very pale.

"Was it not Lord Kilmac?" she demanded, half-articulately.

"Yes," I answered.

"My brother's murderer ! Still alive, still unpunished !"

"He would not have ridden back so easily," I replied, "if you and these two ladies had been in a safe place."

"What matters that?" she said, petulantly. "Why did I not come dressed for war? These garments are ever out of place in such times !"

My mother and Lady Betty addressed some soothing words to the chafing girl, which encouraged her to tell them in a few broken sentences the crime that Lord Kilmac had perpetrated against her brother's life.

We paused for the distressed girl to regain her composure. This was effected in a short time, whereupon Lord Alfred and I assisted the women to mount their horses, and we were ready to start home.

But at that moment Lady Betty called our attention to the little boat on the farther shore which was moving toward us across the lake, pushed by the wind in its single sail. The boat held a solitary occupant, and as his shallop shot over the water we soon perceived that he was a hermit, dressed in a coarse garb of brown woollen

stuff, with a hood over his head of the same material. Around his waist was a girdle from which hung a string of large beads and a crucifix. His hair was fiery red, and his face, all but the eyes, was covered by an unkempt and flowing beard of the same colour. He held the sail and tiller with skill, and it was not long before the fresh breeze pushed his boat against the shore.

Climbing out of the little vessel with apparent difficulty, as if retarded by rheumatism or advancing age, I knew not which, he drew it partly upon the shore, and then came toward us with a slow and heavy stride.

"*Pax vobiscum !*" he said, making the sign of the cross.

We all looked on without stirring, except Catherine, who crossed herself and repeated :

"*Pax vobiscum !*" She then asked him in the Irish tongue : "*Ereud ata uait ?*" (What dost thou want ?)

He answered in the same tongue : "*Gpáding Dia op cionn gac uile má,*" which meant, Love God above all things !

"Father," she said, clouding her face with an imperious frown, "we are about to return to my home at Carberry Hall. If there is aught that I can do for thee, speak."

"Daughter," he answered, with his eyes on the ground in meekness, "I am a poor hermit whose bare abode in yonder rock has even now been invaded by hostile men. Neither my garb nor my sacred office would stay them in their wanton insult. They have ejected me from the cavern which has sheltered my worship of God for thirty years, and bidden me out into the world or they would slay me."

His head shook with emotion as he told of this hardship, and Catherine's impatient spirit relented.

"Who are the men who have so little respect for holiness?" she asked.

"Even Lord Kilmac and the remnant of his slaughtered following," he replied, in an angry tone. "They said that they had a work of revenge to perform and they would be free from my presence while they laid their plans in my hermitage."

"Alas, father," she cried, "I do commiserate the evil fortune of any one who falls into the power of that wicked man. I would I had been in thy place to strike him dead!"

"Nay, daughter," he said, "let us not think evil against the wicked. Are we not commanded to love our enemies?"

"I pray you, good father, keep such counsel for thy hermitage, or the confessional," she cried, with bitterness in her voice. "I will know no theology but the old law of a life for a life until I revenge my brother's death on that base lord!"

He kept his face on the ground for a moment, and then said, "I hope that Heaven will bring a more peaceful spirit into thy heart, daughter. But enough of Lord Kilmac and his iniquities for the present. The gentle wind of Heaven hath wafted my little boat to thy feet, as by a providential purpose. Daughter, canst thou point out the way of peace to a servant of God who is now, alas, homeless?"

"If thou canst make thy way to Carberry Hall thou shalt have at least a temporary abiding place. But stop! Captain Marmaduke, I had forgotten that you are the master there. Will you permit this hermit to come as I have said?"

Lady Betty, who was close beside me, whispered,

“Yes, pray let him come, for her sake, Captain Marmaduke.”

I liked not the appearance of the hermit and had eyed him with suspicion from the first. He would not look into our eyes, and there seemed to be no ring of sincerity in his voice. But I was incapable of denying a request from Catherine in such a matter, and so I answered :

“Surely, in a thing like this, you must have your own way in your own house, Miss Dillon.”

“Then come to Carberry Hall,” she said to the hermit, “and you shall have shelter for the present. What is your name ?”

“I am Father Triscadal,” he replied, “the Hermit of the Lake.”

Catherine started. “I have heard the name from childhood,” she cried, “but never saw I thee before !”

“No,” he said. “I love not this world. I thank you most deeply from my heart for your generous offer of shelter. I hold a debt to the English Captain also. May our Lady keep you all in happiness ! I will follow you to Carberry Hall presently.”

“Farewell, then, Father Triscadal,” she said. “A good supper shall reward your walk.”

We turned our horses homeward, leaving the monk standing on the shore gazing after us with a look which impressed me as an expression of everything but holiness and piety. But we had not gone far when, turning my head, I saw him trudging on after us with a laboured step.

On the way back the taste of danger had served to keep the three women huddled together, with Lord Alfred and me beside them, and my troopers close

behind. Lady Betty's spirits were heightened by the excitement of the afternoon, and she talked vivaciously of the dangers of our ride, soon having us all a-laughing, including Catherine, by the drollery of her discourse.

"There was one moment," she said, "when I wished ourselves transformed into swans, like those unhappy children, so that we might have flown away from peril. We three women, and your son, Lady Marmaduke, for the fourth swan, which would have left you, Lord Alfred, to die with the gallant troopers."

"I like not the honour you give me," answered Lord Alfred. "Rather than die away from my ship, with the ladies and your Captain having it so merrily above, I should choose to be a demon of the air, like the wicked stepmother, and go after you."

"Never go after a lady in a shape like that," said Catherine. "If you had chosen to await the foe with your sword drawn, we swans might have harnessed ourselves to yonder little boat and drawn you across the water when you wearied of the fight."

"Like the Knight of the Holy Grail," said my mother.

"And, by the way, Miss Dillon," said Lady Betty, "I heard you repining because you had not come hither dressed for war. Now, may I ask, what war-dress is fashionable in this country for a young woman?"

I glanced at Lord Alfred and regretted that he was listening for her reply. But Catherine answered serenely :

"I wear my brother's clothes when outside my own roof as often as I wear my own. Indeed, I will not call them my brother's, for they were made for me."

My mother looked a little shocked, but Lady Betty was delighted.

"How I wish that I might do that!" she cried; and then she blushed to the roots of her golden hair. "In times of war it makes a difference, of course," she said. "And do you ride your horse when dressed so?" she asked, with great interest.

"Yes," replied Catherine,—“this horse, the best in Ireland. Do you not think him such, Captain Marma-
duke?”

"The best I have seen, surely," I answered.

"And do you ride like—like these gentlemen?" asked Lady Betty, again blushing.

"Just like them," replied Catherine.

"And you wear a sword?"

"Yes."

"And can use it as well as any Englishman I know," I said.

"How I should love to see you so accoutred!" exclaimed Lady Betty. "Pray, put on your—your brother's clothes as soon as we reach home, I beseech you."

"With pleasure," answered Catherine. "I can ride, fight, and swim just like a man. My father taught me how to fence, and I have never yet been disarmed, though I once met a better swordsman."

"I love to hear you say so," said the English girl, "but I could never do those things. Not that I would not," she hastened to explain, as if fearful of implying a rebuke, "but my heart has not the courage of yours. I am frightened at the first appearance of danger. Once there this afternoon I feared I was going to swoon from fright."

I observed Lord Alfred draw nearer to Lady Betty at these words, with an air to protect her from every peril. Hers was the womanhood that he preferred.

"Such courage in a woman is rare," said my mother, "but it is not wholly unknown in England. Charlotte de la Tremouille, Countess of Derby, held her home for seventeen weeks against the Parliament's siege in the late war in England. She fought the Roundheads with her own sword and helmet and cuirass, sallied out and took their guns away, and drove them off at last, Prince Rupert helping her in the end to give them a good beating."

"Now, I would give much to fight beside a woman like that!" cried Catherine. "I hate the spirit which drives women to tears when their safety is threatened." Then, seeing a look of mortification on Lady Betty's face, she leaned over, caught her hand, and kissed it. "Not you, my dear," she said gently, "there is a type of womanhood which is too fragile for war; perhaps it is the more beautiful for being fragile. Do you not think so, Lord Alfred?"

It was a hard question for the young nobleman to answer, with the two types before him. He did say that men looked at the matter from different views. For himself he thought he would admire the more rugged type but would love the fragile kind. Then he blushed scarlet and said that that was not exactly what he meant. But my mother and Catherine laughed, and just then we arrived at Carberry Hall.

I gave the men on guard a word of explanation concerning the hermit who was to arrive, and we passed inside the house to refresh ourselves for supper.

The evening meal was eaten with hearty appetites,

our ride and the incidents in connection with it having given us a zest for its enjoyment. After supper the candles were lit, and Lord Alfred related the story of Beowulf and the Dragon, telling the tale with much spirit. When we had discussed the meaning and purpose of the ancient epic to our hearts' content, all said good night, and we sought our rooms for sleep.





CHAPTER XXIV

THE MISHAP OF LADY BETTY

THE next morning, as soon as we had finished breakfast, Catherine announced that she would dress as an Irish gentleman and go for a ride ; and, perceiving Lord Alfred and myself exchange looks of regret, she assumed a teasing air and asked Lady Betty if she would not accompany her. The English girl clapped her hands and said she would be delighted to go forth with so doughty an escort. My mother, while appearing to be interested, made a mild protest on the score of danger, which was echoed by Lord Alfred and myself ; but our opposition served only to increase the resolution of the young women, who defied us to frighten them from their design.

There being no help for it, I ordered Bess and another safe steed saddled for their excursion, and the two horses were soon brought forward. While the ladies were dressing for the ride, I inquired whether Father Triscadal, the Hermit of the Lake, had arrived the night before ; and was informed that he had, and that he was still somewhere about the place. Lieutenant Haddon told me that he liked not the hermit ; and when I answered that

no Catholic priest would find favour in his prejudiced eyes, he said that perhaps I spoke aright.

"But," he continued, "this hermit has a most repulsive appearance. He will look no man in the eye, which is ever a bad sign. Then he keeps his own face hidden as well as his wild hair and great hood will do it. Besides, he has shown a most pernicious curiosity about the place here, looking into our numbers and condition with a zeal which belongs not to the holy office he affects. I like him not, Captain."

"You are not bound to like him, then, Elijah," I replied, "nor do I hold any love for him. Keep a close eye on him, but let no injury be done to him while he preserves his own decorum."

At that moment Father Triscadal came shambling up with his slow, heavy tread. I would have turned from him without a salutation had he not made bold to address me.

"Good morning, Captain Marmaduke," he said, in his whining, exasperating voice. "The peace of Heaven be with you !"

"I wish you good day," I said, shortly.

"You command a stout troop, Captain Marmaduke," he continued, "a watchful, alert garrison. You could not easily be surprised or tricked by any foe, could you, Captain Marmaduke ?"

"We aim to guard against such designs," I answered, wishing the fellow would go away.

"It is fortunate that yonder ladies have so discreet a champion, Captain Marmaduke. There are bad men in these parts."

"Yes," I returned, "I know of some bad men in these parts," and I looked straight at him. But his

eyes were on the ground. His manner was meekness itself, although his voice had a rasping insolence that aroused my resentment.

"You will not permit the young women to ride forth alone?" he asked, with a curious air, as he saw them coming. I made no answer, for I was glad that their approach gave me a pretext to break off the conversation.

The two girls came down the lawn with happy faces. Catherine wore her man's dress,—boots, spurs, breeches, doublet, belted sword, lace collar, and plumed hat. The love of adventurous opposition beamed out of her eyes, and as she came before me she struck the air with her whip and defied me to produce man or monster potent enough to take Lady Betty away from her. Betty, in her riding habit, fresh and pretty as a daisy, laughed outright, vowed that she had never felt so safe with any cavalier, and declared that her heart henceforth belonged to her gallant escort. Lord Alfred and my mother came up, and, as the two girls infected us with their gay spirits, our talk ran from quip to quibble, as light as air.

But Lord Alfred soon whispered to me that with my permission he meant to ride after them, and I told him I would have a score of the troopers saunter half a mile behind them in case of need. We kept this to ourselves, however, not wishing to rob the young women of their pleasure.

Lord Alfred's horse, which I had given him, was led down the path by an Irish groom, who, being commanded to return to the house for Lord Alfred's cloak, dropped the bridle and walked away on his errand. The horse began to crop the grass on the lawn, when

Father Triscadal took the bridle over his arm and stood still.

"He might catch his foot in the bridle," said the hermit, apologetically.

Catherine sprang into her saddle with an agile grace that made Lady Betty shout with delight. "I shall learn to do that," she exclaimed, "when I get back to England!" And Lord Alfred lifted her into her seat.

But Catherine's face suddenly clouded. She was looking her horse over with the practised eye of a rider, and, as Bess set her foot forward, she declared that the horse had a loose shoe. There was a general expression of regret. Lady Betty, who had reached the open gate, halted her horse and asked if they must give up the ride.

"Never!" cried Catherine. "Our farrier is at the stable. One nail and two minutes will make the shoe perfect. I will return quickly!" And she galloped back round the path.

Lord Alfred walked back a few paces and met the groom, who assisted him to don his cloak. Haddon had walked off to prepare the troopers who were to follow the women. My mother and I had our backs to the gate, having followed Catherine with our eyes until she disappeared behind the house.

There was a scream from Lady Betty.

I turned round and saw a sight that riveted me to the spot with astonishment. Father Triscadal had imperceptibly advanced with Lord Alfred's horse until he was beside Lady Betty. A movement on his part had caused her to scream with fright. The hermit had thrown off his coarse brown frock and hood, and leaped into Lord Alfred's saddle. At his belt, instead of rosary and crucifix, were now a sword and dagger. The red hair and

beard were thrown to the ground, and the villainous features of Lord Kilmac stood revealed. Quicker than I can relate it he gave me a shout of defiance ; and then, seizing the bridle of Lady Betty's horse, and lashing it with the whip snatched from her hand, he pressed his own spurred heels into his steed, and was off with his terrified captive with the speed of the wind.

So suddenly, so unexpectedly, was the abduction performed, that its effect upon Lord Alfred, my mother, and myself was like unto an attack of paralysis. Lord Kilmac and his prey were rapidly increasing the distance between themselves and us, and we could see that Lady Betty, more dead than alive, was holding tightly to her horse's mane to keep from falling off. The impotence of our own situation was emphasised by the fact that there was not an available horse in sight for pursuing them.

But our inaction lasted for only an instant.

"The damnable villain !" cried Lord Alfred, "the perfidious, hypocritical, thievish knave ! If I take not his life for this outrage—" but he was running back to the stables at full speed and I could not hear the conclusion of his speech.

My mother was now wringing her hands in agony and crying out to me to go at once after her dear Betty. But I needed no urging in such a circumstance.

"Quick !" I shouted to Tom Butfer, who had beheld the abduction, "my horse ! Bring Dick to me,—quick !" and Butfer was following after Lord Alfred in a trice. "Tell Lieutenant Haddon to make all haste with his men !" I cried to Luke Marvin.

At that instant Catherine came galloping down the path. She had passed Lord Alfred and the trooper, and

divined by the agitation of their manner that something was amiss. But not until she reached my side and saw that Lady Betty was gone did she suspect what had happened. Then the sight of the pseudo hermit's garb lying in the gate told her that there had been perfidy at the hands of Father Triscadal.

"Where?" was the only word she spoke.

I pointed across the plain at the receding figures of the riders.

"Who is yonder hermit?" she demanded.

"Lord Kilmac!" I said.

She gave almost a cry of rage. Then, throwing her jaunty whip aside and setting her spurs into her horse's flanks, she was off without a word, before I could stay her rash purpose. In a moment the fleet mare had carried her beyond the sound of my voice.

Lord Alfred came thundering down the path and would have ridden out alone had I not halted him with a request that we all make the pursuit together with due order and discipline.

He chafed in his saddle, but stood still. Tom Butfer now rode up on his own horse, leading Dick for me. Haddon came, also, with twenty troopers. I told the Lieutenant to remain at Carberry Hall. I then looked my men over carefully, saw that they were well armed and mounted, and, giving the order, "Forward!" we were off at a steady gallop, Lord Alfred riding beside me.

As we sped over the ground in pursuit of Lady Betty's abductor I could see that Catherine was rapidly gaining on Lord Kilmac. I have said that Lake Darvra was but three miles away; and, after making the bend in the road, we came in sight of it in a very few minutes. As we approached nearer and nearer to its shore we

could distinguish the actions of those in front of us very plainly. We saw Lord Kilmac stop the two horses which carried himself and Lady Betty, and, springing to the ground, pull the struggling girl off her saddle. Catherine was but a hundred yards behind him, and Bess was carrying her with the fleetness of a bird. The brazen lord saw her coming, and, what gave him much more concern, he saw us close behind her. The little boat which had carried him across the lake on the previous afternoon was still resting on the pebbled beach. Flinging his fair burden roughly into the boat, he pushed it out into the water, made a step or two beyond the shore in order to give it momentum, and then sprang into it himself. As he did so, Catherine, with her sword in hand rode straight to the water's edge, and halted there in baffled rage.

The ruffian had pushed his boat some thirty feet from the shore where it seemed to stop, and he was adjusting the little sail with great coolness as we arrived on the scene.

Lady Betty was crouching in the stern in a silent agony of fear. Lord Alfred seized a trooper's carbine and raised it to his shoulder, but forebore to fire lest he might hurt the lady.

"Oh, ho, my gay Englishman!" cried Lord Kilmac, shaking his fist at me as I fumed upon my horse. "I know not whether your heart be most with this pretty doll, or with yonder imperious beauty. But my purpose to marry this one to my whole troop will pinch you enough until I get a better chance to settle scores with you! Why don't you ride after me, Captain?"

He had now got his sail set and the shallop was gaining headway before the breeze. We all stood helpless on

the shore, and not a word was spoken until the boat was half-way across the water. Lady Betty's terrified face was enough to melt a heart of stone. When the boat was drawing near to the farther shore, I turned to Lord Alfred. He was white to the lips.

"Lord Alfred," I said, "what, think you, is this fellow's design?"

"There must be a secret cave," he answered, "where his men are waiting him. Doubtless it is difficult of access or he would not wear so much assurance in going thither. God help the poor girl! Why is there no other boat on this lake?"

Lord Kilmac had now reached the rugged shore beyond, and he quickly moored his boat. Taking the English girl in his arms he stepped upon a projecting rock and disappeared.

"Forward!" I said. "Where his men rode yesterday we will endeavour to ride to-day."

Again we were off at a gallop and had soon passed beyond the stone hills where the Irishmen had ridden on the day before. When we came to the spot where it seemed that the entrance to the cave should be, we slackened our pace and scanned the way narrowly.

The rocky road had left no track of a horse's hoof, and when we had ridden for ten minutes we began to feel that our search was hopeless, when Catherine gave a shout and stopped her horse. We all halted likewise, and then there appeared from among the rocks, as if placed there by nature, the head and shoulders of an old and wrinkled man. His hair was white and thin; his beard was long and venerable; and age had reduced him to the last appearance of decrepitude. He was more than half-naked, his only raiment being a thin shirt, which

covered his loins, and a scapular round his neck. He came slowly from the hole out of which he seemed to emerge, and beckoned to us to approach him. I, with Lord Alfred and Catherine, obeyed his signal.

"I am the Hermit of the Lake," he said, in a thin whisper. "I am Father Triscadal and have lived under these rocks for thirty years. No human being has looked into my face nor I in his during all that time until yesterday. Then this ruffian, whose men call him Lord Kilmac, came here ; and he and they scourged me with their swords ; yea, and they stripped me of my raiment and of the holy similitudes of my religion !"

The old man's voice rose into a shriek as he proceeded with the story of his wrongs. We waited impatiently for the conclusion.

"The—the wicked lord then arrayed himself in my garments, put on a wig and beard, and went out upon the lake in the boat that I use for gathering the fish which sustain my thread of life. For God and our Lady provide for my humble appetite in summer and in winter, and——."

"Yes, yes, good father !" I cried, interrupting the old man's tedious garrulity, "but what of this vile lord ?"

"True, true !" he answered, and then his mind seemed to wander for a moment, and I feared that all would be lost ere he would come to the point.

"This Lord Kilmac has now returned," I said, by way of jogging his memory.

The deep sockets of his eyes burned with the slow kindling wrath of outraged dignity.

"Yes !" he said, "he is back—and a young girl in his power. Come you in search of her ?"

"Yes," answered Lord Alfred and Catherine in a breath.

"Quick! What of her?" I demanded.

"They thought they had put me into a dungeon," said the hermit, with a sort of chuckle. "They pushed me into a dark hole, and they themselves kept the front of the cavern where is my altar. But there is a secret exit which they knew not of,—even here!"

"Good!" I cried. "Now, how many of them are there, good hermit, and in what posture are they?"

"Twenty men in all," he replied. "The woman lies senseless on a pallet. The men are drinking usquebaugh from their flasks. The vile lord is cursing Heaven and earth, and swearing a dark revenge on one Marmaduke!"

"Show us the way thither at once!" I said.

"Nay, but there must be no bloodshed before the altar of our Lady!" cried the hermit. "I forgot that thou wouldst do violence in the sanctuary or I would never have told thee a jot! My altar is but a shelf, and it hath known not one candle in many years, but such as it is it is consecrated by my solitary life to our Lady's devotion! No violence," he continued, in a whisper. "No violence!"

"Good hermit," I pleaded, "yonder fair girl is in dire peril from which we would rescue her quickly. You shall have candles and candlesticks,—many of them,—if you will but show us the way to this nest of thieves!"

Now, there is no man but can be successfully tempted if the right appeal be made to him. One who will resist a venal offering will yield to worldly honour; and one who will spurn every bribe unto himself will succumb if

either his vanity or his superstition be touched on the quick. Father Triscadal's simplicity of life was beyond corrupting, but an offering to his spiritual apprehension at once overcame his scruples.

"If there is violence I must reconsecrate my altar," he explained. "You say I shall have candles and candlesticks?"

"Yes," I answered, eagerly, "six dozen waxen candles and two candlesticks of pure silver."

His eyes danced with delight.

"Come," he said, "on foot, all. The way is narrow."

I stepped back and ordered the horses put in charge of four troopers, while sixteen were to follow me into the hermitage. I asked Catherine as a favour to me to remain behind, but she imperatively refused to do so.

"This adventure is full of peril," I said. "I would not have you engage further in its dangers."

"My brother's murderer is yonder," she replied, with stubborn resolution.

"But leave him to me," I pleaded.

"You do but waste your words."

"Promise me, then, that you will shed no blood. I would not have you crimson your hand."

"I will promise you nothing."

It was hopeless. Telling the hermit to lead the way, I followed him into the narrow entrance, my sword in hand. Close behind me came Catherine, and after her Lord Alfred. Then, one by one, were sixteen of the Ironsides, every one with his carbine ready for firing.



CHAPTER XXV

A RESCUE

THE bent, tottering, and half-clad figure of the ancient hermit pressed ahead slowly and with great difficulty through the dark cavern. There was barely space enough for us to follow him in single file and stooping posture for the distance of a hundred feet. Then the area widened, and presently we came into a passage where four or five might walk abreast. No ray of light pierced the pitch darkness, and it suddenly came into my mind that if this hermit meant to do treachery upon us as the other had done we were now in his power. Prompted by this thought I seized his thin shirt with a grasp that nearly tore it from his back, and the sword held in the same hand lay lengthwise of his spine. At the same moment, Catherine, whose sturdy courage seemed likewise affected in the awful darkness, caught me timidly by the wrist and then by the hand, and I straightway closed my great fingers, making her hand a willing prisoner.

"Hermit, whither are you leading us?" I demanded, in a fierce whisper.

"By our Lady, I will lead you back to your horses if you do not unhand me!" he cried, in his wheezy voice.

"Hist, then !" I cautioned him, "and bring us into daylight. Are there holes or stumbling places here ?"

"There is a bottomless pit just on your left," he said. "A false step there and you will fall into eternity."

Now, Catherine was on my left, and at this warning she pressed up so closely to me in a shivering horror that I in turn crowded the hermit against the wall on the right. I turned and whispered Lord Alfred to hug the wall, and he passed the word back to the last trooper. I was still keeping tight hold of Catherine's hand.

We picked our steps noiselessly for five minutes, at the end of which we came upon a faint ray of sunlight from a natural chamber in the rock beyond. Catherine withdrew her hand from mine, and we all stood still.

"But two can enter abreast," whispered the hermit. "They are all in there. It is a large chamber."

I turned to my men.

"I and Lord Alfred will enter first," I began.

"And I, too," interrupted Catherine.

"We will step quickly to either side. Do you also step to one side or the other so that all may get within. Once inside, fire your pieces at the enemy if the quarters be not too close, but beware of hurting Lady Betty."

This was all said in a whisper. Then softly I said, "Charge !"

We sprang through the entrance to a large room in the manner that I had ordered, Catherine keeping close to my side. Before the startled Irishmen knew what had happened we were upon them, and I cried, "Fire !" They were on their feet as the sharp report of our carbines rang out, and six or eight of them fell, dead or wounded. Then a general fight ensued. Lord Kilmac,

who was sitting moodily on the ground, saw that he was trapped, and drawing his sword he made at me. Before I could receive him, Catherine stepped in front of me and their swords were instantly in fierce play. Lord Alfred passed his blade through a tall man-at-arms, and then, as the fighting grew thick in the corner where Lady Betty lay, still unconscious, on the pallet, he gathered her up on his breast and continued to fight with one free arm.

I kept a narrow scrutiny on Catherine's combat with the Irish leader. At the first sign of weakness on her part I was ready to take her place. But to interfere with her at present was not my design. She displayed a wonderful skill in handling her weapon, but as this was probably the first time she had ever fought a foe who aimed at her life, it was not long before the new sensation of a really fatal duel had its natural effect on her woman's heart. I saw it come into her eyes that she might not be able to conquer this brutal enemy, and there was a momentary look of distress on her face. But it soon passed away, and she pressed Lord Kilmac so hard that, in stepping backward before her impetuous charge, his foot struck an obstruction and he fell to the floor. She thrust her foot on his neck and raised her sword to despatch him, when I seized her arm and drew her away, struggling violently.

"No," I said, soothingly, "not you. This is no deed for you to perform."

Lord Kilmac was quickly on his feet. Half of his men were slain ; the rest had fled.

"Villain, you owe your life to me !" cried Lord Alfred, endeavouring to disengage himself from the clasp of Lady Betty.

Catherine continued her protests, uttered one or two bitter reproaches on my interference, and then, being spent in strength and feeling a woman's reaction, she began to weep, and, as I still kept hold of her arm, she was soon sobbing on my heart, where I was most content to hold her.

As Lord Alfred approached the Irish chieftain, Lord Kilmac darted past him and sprang through the opening into the darkness of the inner cave. Lord Alfred followed him a few paces, but soon returned with a crest-fallen air and announced that the gloomy labyrinth was impenetrable.

Catherine quickly recovered her composure and drew away. She and Lord Alfred gave their whole attention to Lady Betty, whom they carried outside, away from the gruesome scene of our fight. She soon regained her senses, and, after having a fit of hysteria, was laughing in the happiness of her rescue.

The entrance to the hermit's cave was wide, but it was hidden from view by the peculiar formation of the rocks in front of it. One had to pass round these sentinels of nature to see, on one side, the lake, and on the other the country beyond it.

Father Triscadal now came in through the secret way which we had used in effecting our entrance, and looked upon the scene of blood with undisguised horror. He crossed himself many times and uttered his prayers unceasingly. I gave him a purse of silver of sufficient worth to purchase the candles and their holders, as I had promised. I reminded him that he must at once get help from the countryfolk to bury the dead Irishmen, or his place would be uninhabitable. It likewise occurred to me to say, that since his holy retreat had been dese-

crated by the sanguinary effects of war he would perhaps not care to inhabit it longer, but should betake himself to a monastery near by, and end his days with creatures of human kind. He received my suggestion with resentful horror. Bidding the anchoret farewell, therefore, I drew my men away from the place, and, re-joining our friends outside, we returned to our horses.

On our way thither we came upon some ten horses which were tethered in a green plot leading off from one of the great, rocky fissures; the other beasts that had belonged to our foes had been ridden off by the soldiers who had escaped from the cave. When all our party were mounted on our steeds, my troopers took the halters of the native horses, and with this useful spoil of victory we set out for Carberry Hall.

We arrived there in less than three hours from the time of our departure. My mother was overjoyed to see us, and the happy end of our adventure was celebrated by a great feast shortly after the noon hour.





CHAPTER XXVI

TELLING A SECRET TO ONE'S MOTHER

AFTER dinner my mother announced that she and Lady Betty would certainly depart for Dublin the next day, and would go thence to England in the first ship.

"The perils of this country are such," she said, "as no woman should encounter unnecessarily. I will not have my Betty exposed to further dangers."

I glanced swiftly at Catherine. The speech had emphasised her own desolate situation once more. At that instant a resolution came into my mind with a force which, for the time being, overwhelmed every other purpose. My love for Catherine had increased with every incident that had occurred ; and her treatment of me during the experiences of the morning had made me feel that there might now be some hope for a more favourable consideration on her part of the proposal I had made to her.

Accordingly I sought an early opportunity to take my mother into an unoccupied apartment, whereupon I shut the door and informed her that I desired to consult with her about a matter of the gravest importance. Her face at once took on an air of loving solicitude.

"It is a great privilege, my dear son," said she, "to be permitted to counsel with you. We have not been together so for a long time."

As we seated ourselves I had a speech all prepared and at my tongue's end by which she was to know all my secret in a short sentence. But when I looked into her earnest eyes my courage departed, and I stammered some inarticulate things that meant nothing.

"This war, dear mother, is going to be a most cruel and sanguinary affair,—at least so I think. There has been great provocation given to our English army.—Those who are native here——"

Then I gulped down a lump in my throat and stopped.

"The natives here will suffer for their outrages, my son, of course. This is what you would say?"

"Yes,—that is—not quite, mother. Some, you know, are deserving persons. Indeed, many of them are those against whom there is no reproach."

"Quite likely, my son. A whole race could scarcely be so malignant as those members of it who have inflicted these massacres on our settlers."

"Then, you know, mother—some of the women of this country.—What consideration is to be shown to them?"

"The consideration which true English soldiers always give to womanhood, I hope, my son."

"Yes,—but—" and I stopped short.

I do not know whether my mother had a sudden inkling of the truth. My confused manner was enough to suggest a secret of the kind I was vainly endeavouring to disclose. But she merely said, "Go on, my son."

"This young Irish lady, for instance,—Catherine Dillon!"

"A very beautiful woman, my son." There was the slightest shade of reserve, possibly of suspicion, in my mother's face as she said this.

"Mother, I love this young woman !"

It was out. The blood rushed to my head until my face burned.

My mother rose quickly to her feet. She wore an angry and disdainful countenance that I had never seen before.

"I trusted that your father and I had brought you up as a man of sense," she said.

I made no reply.

"How long have you known this woman?"

"Less than two weeks."

"She is a Catholic?"

"Yes."

She walked up and down the floor deliberately, and I saw that she was striving to master her resentment. When she stopped in front of me, she exclaimed :

"Surely, you do not mean to convince yourself that you are in earnest !"

"Mother, I never held to a purpose more earnestly in my life. You know that I am not a frivolous man."

"That is why your speech does so much amaze me. Rashness is unlike you."

"Is it rash to love where one's soul is engaged?"

"You know my heart's wish in that respect, my son."

"Truly I do, mother ; but affection cannot come at one's bidding. Besides, Lord Alfred, I think, has begun a siege there. Another suitor would be hopeless."

"I know not that. But surely an acquaintance of two weeks cannot lead a serious man into so deplorable a tangle."

"I would not call it in that way," I said ; "but two weeks hath made me love her."

"A rash, hasty, and unreasonable passion," said my mother. "Against your religion, your country, and your family. You cannot tell me that your conscience approves it, my son?"

My mother was growing calmer, and she again seated herself beside me.

"I cannot defend it against the grounds you have advanced, mother. I simply tell you what condition I am in. If it be a thing to censure, still do I love her."

"But you have been raised to look upon Catholics——"

"As Pagans, mother,—as heathens,—as creatures beyond the pale of human sympathy and respect. I have been taught that Catholics are a band of creatures beneath the quality of men, whose aim it is to hand down to perdition all souls outside the Pale whose destruction they can compass in time or eternity. This is the aspect in which they are considered in England. But that is false!—yes, as false as any other soul-consuming fallacy that has its birth in bigoted and wicked self-righteousness! I came to Ireland with even such a notion as that in my mind against these persecuted people. I met this young girl,—and all is changed! What are the Catholics? Earnest people, like unto ourselves! Bigoted, prejudiced, like unto ourselves. Proclaiming themselves right and all others wrong, as we do. Declaring that eternal truth is theirs alone, even as we do! Ready to fight,—nay, actually fighting, as we ourselves are fighting, for Christianity! Claiming Christ as their Captain, as we ourselves claim Him, and filling the land with horror for religion's sake, as we are doing, and all be-

cause we agree not in the forms of our worship of God !”

I had risen to my feet.

“ You will not declaim against your religion, my son ? ”

“ Not until it attacks another religion, mother. We in England have fought for liberty of conscience, and we pressed on to the overturning of the monarchy until we secured it. But what is liberty of conscience if it denies to our neighbour what it claims for ourselves ? Is not every theological dispute a mark of bigotry, or self-righteousness ? ”

“ But has this Irish lady grown into the same liberal frame on this subject ? ”

“ Alas, no ! She is like all the rest, Catholic and Protestant. She will not yield an inch.”

“ That should end a further affection between you, then.”

“ Is love a thing of logic, mother, that you speak of it in this matter-of-fact way ? Do you not know that it is a passion of the soul, which neither reason, nor logic, nor expediency, nor all the height and depth of Heaven can alter or efface ? When I held this maiden in my arms—” (My mother interrupted me with a gesture of impatience. “ You have got along rapidly for so short an acquaintance ! ” she said. I paid no heed to her remark.) “ —love came all over me even as I have said. I find her to be a woman, a child of divine creation, as my own mother is. I find her to be one fit for a man to love through all his life. I find her to be loving, gentle, and kind ; and then again cold, severe, and full of passion. Wayward, she is,—contradictory,—in twenty moods each day—in short, dear mother, a woman ; the loveliest, I think, in the world ! ”

"She has unsettled your tongue as well as your brain !" said my mother.

There was silence for a moment, when she asked suddenly :

"What will the army say to this ? What will General Cromwell say ? You will surely lose their respect. Will it not stop your progress ?"

"Such results may even follow. It is not at all unlikely."

"Oh, my son, my son !" she cried, yielding to bitter tears for the first time. "You have ever been my heart's joy and pride. Your career in the army has fulfilled a mother's hope of honour. I have ever thought that your life has been precious in the sight of the Lord. I have always believed that He has chosen you for great ends. We both know that you are beloved by England's illustrious soldier, even as if you were his own son. And now, to think that you would throw away all hope, all trust, all discretion !—it is too much !" And my poor mother broke down under the weight of her keen anguish.

I paused for a moment. This was the most bitter cup that I had ever tasted.

"Mother," I said, "I can make neither denial nor defence. All that I can say in answer to your reproaches is, that I love this maiden even as I have said. Perhaps I might summon up resolution to march away from this place to-day and never look upon her face again ; but it would be a march to misery."

"My dear son," she said, speaking more calmly, though she was still weeping ; "I would not command you to make such a sacrifice, if, indeed, the result would be what you have described. But it is so sudden ! If

your heart had grown into its fevered condition after a long acquaintance,—if you had been attracted to each other through congenial qualities of intellect and affection which would justify your union,—I would raise no objection, no matter how weighty the obstacles might seem to be. But as it is, a spell has been cast over you,—you are the victim of an enchantment ! You, the victorious soldier, have succumbed to the fascinations of an hereditary enemy,—you are a prisoner to your conquered foe ! ”

“ I have hardly so far forsaken my reason, mother.”

“ Oh, this project of yours is against reason, faith, and conscience ! ”

“ Against reason and faith it may be, mother, but not against conscience. I feel no qualm of conscience in loving this girl,—not one ! ”

“ But, my son, have you reflected,—you surely have not,—on the nature and quality of marriage ? Marriage—true marriage—is not a temporal partnership between two persons drawn together by a frivolous attachment. It is not a condition to be entered upon lightly or unworthily. It cannot be laid aside when one or the other grows weary of it. You take its obligations upon you in sickness and in health. That means not only sickness of the body, but sickness of the soul as well. There is nothing so high or so low in human life that in marriage can justly turn one mate against the other. It can take account of no offence. Founded on the highest type of love that is known to humanity, it has only two qualities, to love and to forgive. Think, then, oh, my son, of the responsibility which should sway the mind of one who yearns to enter into such a holy union. Your soul and hers are as far apart in your conceptions of life and of

religion as the two shores of the ocean. Can you, then, persist in your rash and ill-considered passion ? ”

“ Mother, I have listened intently to all that you have said. The nobility of your own soul is reflected in your exposition of this subject. You have, I think, overpraised me as a man ; a mother is apt to do so. You have, I know, underrated the woman who is my heart’s choice. The time of our acquaintance has indeed been short, and there would seem to be grounds in that respect for your objections. But believe me, dear mother, I know this woman as well to-day as if we had been together for a year. I have seen her in early every circumstance of life. She has taken a sword in her hand and defended her home against our invasion with a man’s courage. She has faced the perils of war in the night and in the day, showing a mind resplendent of that honour which we love in England. She has beheld death come to her father and her brother until her own spirit has bent and quivered under the shock of an awful bereavement, but she has regained her poise of mind through the calm philosophy of a transcendent womanhood. She is a woman among ten thousand, mother ! ”

“ But you say she is bigoted ! ”

“ That is true. Her ideas are narrow and she holds firmly to inherited superstitions which she never will let loose. But what matters that ? I am an Episcopalian. Were you to choose me a wife from the Presbyterians our differences would be as irreconcilable, as opinions now stand in England, as those between Catherine and me. If we have the manhood and the womanhood to build a marriage on, what matters a difference of opinion so that true love be there ? ”

“ If I believed true love to be there, my son, I could

look on it with more fortitude. Your life has been a happy one up to this time ; it has been ornamented with virtue and honour. Your deeds have added to the glory of the name you bear. Now, however, the time of your adversity begins,—I feel it,—I know it to be true. If you are resolved to enter upon a marriage which will distress the heart of every friend who loves you,—which will turn against you every one who seeks a pretext for your disparagement ;—if a mother's pleading and your own conscience will not break your resolution——”

“Mother, I am still resolved. It is my destiny. I cannot do otherwise.”

“Then, my son, I give you my blessing.”

She kissed me tenderly and our tears mingled.

“I will love you always, my son. Your wife shall be as a daughter to me. And if affliction must come to you who are more than the apple of my eye, I will help you to bear it, as God will give me strength in my great love for you, and in His love unto us both. Kiss me, my dear son.”





CHAPTER XXVII

AT LOGGERHEADS

MY mother retired to her own chamber to indulge her emotions of grief and disappointment with a degree of agony which I could easily imagine her to suffer. For my part, my heart was torn with pangs of remorse at the sorrow which I had so suddenly brought upon her life. I walked out into the air, but as the companions of my profession were about me on every side, and I found their friendly attentions for the first time unwelcome, I hastened down the lawn and out of the gate.

My cheeks were hot and I felt a guilty thumping at my seat of life. I asked myself a hundred times whether I had the right to involve myself in the difficulties that my mother had pointed out but too plainly. The question that recurred most frequently to my mind was the one she had suggested as to the effect of my marriage on my prestige in the army. My honour as an English soldier was the fire which kept my ambition aglow. If that were dimmed existence would be misery. Would not love, then, lose its power and its solace? Would Catherine cherish me in that sickness of the soul which my mother had described? Would she love me, in these

uncertain adversities that threatened to overwhelm me, with the same fidelity as now in the glory of my military conquests? Suppose that the whirlwind power of my victories had carried the affections of her heart,—would they still be mine if General Cromwell should set the mark of his disfavour upon me after I should violate all the traditions of Puritanism by marrying a Papist?

These were the doubts which passed through my mind as I moodily took my way in a listless manner toward the sea. When I drew near to Roderick's Pool I was the most wretched man in Ireland, and as the desire to be entirely alone was strong within me, I mounted the elevation beyond the pool and climbed down over the projecting rocks into the Dragon's Den. When I had gained the floor in that desolate spot, I felt the savage humour of my mind increase to find myself face to face with Father Terhune.

The tall priest was seated on a jutting rock, looking out to sea in an abstracted way. As my form swung into the den he rose to his feet with a startled air.

"I did not think to find you here," I said, in a scarcely cordial tone.

"I am glad to see you," he replied, in the quiet and respectful voice which invariably marked his conversation with me. "The Dragon's Den is the only place about Carberry Hall now where I can pursue those reflections that are so essential in the office of the priesthood."

"And I have come hither, too, for the purpose of reflection," I answered. "I am as much harassed to-day by the presence of my bustling soldiers as you are."

He saw that I was in an ill humour, and I think he meant, in his polite disposition, to lift me out of myself

and drive away the cares which were visibly disturbing me.

"Solitude is necessary now and then to a thinking man," he observed. "You yourself are fond of solitude, I imagine?"

"Yes," I replied, "when there is business to be done I must be alone to plan it out, if there is time."

"But the nature of your business," he said, smiling as he pronounced the last word, "cannot always wait upon reflection."

"That is very true," I replied. "The business of war too often consists in seeing your foe and fighting him to the death on the instant."

"While with us," said the priest, "business means the unceasing reflection upon the love of God, and the exposition of His true religion to His people."

At any other time, this speech would have excited me to no comment, for I am, I think, a man of gentle feelings, and not given to unnecessary controversy. But in my present mood it was a barbed arrow in my wound, and I seized upon the idea of his remark as a target for my pent-up misery.

"His true religion indeed!" I said. "Is that to be found in Ireland?"

Now, Father Terhune had entertained a much better opinion of me than this intemperate speech would justify; and he looked pained and surprised, but said nothing.

"Yes," I continued, speaking with the greater spirit because of a sense of shame at my lack of politeness, "I wonder that the people of this country have held fast to their traditions for so many centuries."

The blood in the priest's thin face mounted to his temples.

"These are strange words, Captain Marmaduke," he said, with a stately air of indignation. "Especially are they unlooked for from one whom I have esteemed as the model of a gentleman."

In no very good humour, we looked at each other for a moment in silence.

"The Church of Christ is builded upon a rock," cried the priest, with an earnest but suppressed enthusiasm. "The keys thereof were given to the first Pope, they are held to-day in the hand of our Holy Father at Rome; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it!"

"The gates of Hell,—no!" I replied, with equal fervour. "But the sword of truth hath already cut Rome in half, and the blade of steel in the arm of flesh is now doing, in Ireland, and throughout Europe, what work remains in order that the true Church may prevail."

We were both angry,—a condition as unusual with him, I think, as with me. We paced the narrow apartment until we had passed each other two or three times, after which the first burst of temper had cooled away.

"Captain Marmaduke," said the priest, facing me with his habitual good humour restored. "You are a man of good parts,—a thinking man,—one whose heart seems to be filled with a natural kindness. With such a disposition, I have fondly hoped, from the moment of my first contact with you, that you would be a man to whose understanding the beauty and truth of the Catholic religion would not appeal in vain. Now, I think it likely that your education in England has built up a wall of prejudice in your mind which sound argument and proper instruction would remove. Happy indeed would I account myself if I could be the humble instru-

ment whereby a soul like yours might be added to the Church."

"If that wish is in your heart, good father," I said, smiling, "I must tell you that neither argument nor instruction could carry me to Rome."

He laughed pleasantly.

"That seems a hopeless confession," he said. "The man who will heed neither argument nor instruction is like the snail who shuts himself in his shell and thinks his house invulnerable; or, like the ostrich who buries his head in the sand and fancies that no pursuer can wound him. But let us have it out! We are both in the mood for controversy. Come against me, Captain Marmaduke, with the weapons of thy prejudice, and see if I do not make stouter resistance than, unhappily, many of my countrymen have made against thy carnal arms."

There was a beaming smile on his face and an air of sincere candour which always won me to him.

"I am a poor churchman," I said, embarrassed by his odd challenge, "and a worse logician. But the objections which I cherish against your faith I will give you."

"Good," he said.

"Now,—I have been taught that the primitive Church, which I am willing to call the Holy Roman Catholic Church, has transformed itself into something that is quite different from the original model."

"You have hurled your javelin with force, Captain Marmaduke. When it strikes the shield of truth it will burst harmless into a thousand fragments. Proceed."

"In the course of this transformation superstitions were brought in to appeal to the eye, the ear, and the

hand, in the place of that faith which had been sufficient unto all the needs of the heart."

"You are not through?" he asked, with an affected surprise.

"My argument and breath are both out," I said; and we laughed again.

"Your logic is like your fighting, Captain Marmaduke," said the priest. "You cut and thrust brilliantly and drive your enemy away by your very vehemence. But brilliance and vehemence are not argument. Now, I shall try to press you into a corner until you cry mercy. Your first point was, I believe, that the true Church has transformed itself into something that is foreign to the original model? Am I right?"

"Perfectly right."

"Then let me take up that thought with some care, for, as you have made that the foundation of your argument, if I can shatter the foundation the argument itself must fall. You have evidently failed to perceive that the essential difference which separates the true Church from you lies primarily, not in any special dogma, but in the authority on which all her dogmas rest. You, basing your religion on the Bible solely, have conceived that Catholics of course profess to do likewise, and you would doubtless feel like denouncing us for being traitors to our supposed profession. But the true Church's primary doctrine is her own perpetual infallibility. She is inspired, she declares, by the same spirit that inspired the Bible, and her voice is, equally with the Bible, the voice of God. You assume, perchance, that the Bible is the sole rule of faith,—a view, strangely enough, which is nowhere found in the Scriptures,—and you then proceed to show that such and such Catholic doctrines

and practices are unscriptural ;—that is to say, opposed to your peculiar views of Scripture, and therefore to be condemned.”

“ Pray go on,” I said.

“ But the true Church teaches now, as she has ever taught, that she was fully established long before a word of the New Testament was written, that she is not the creation of the Bible, and that it belongs to her, as the original guardian entrusted with its keeping, to expound and declare its meaning. Hence, if you would obtain a true view of the general character of Catholicism, you must begin by sweeping aside all those views which, as an unreconciled son, you have been taught to entertain about the Church.”

“ Then you claim that your Church is older than the New Testament ? ”

“ Exactly.”

“ On what do you base this claim ? ”

“ On the traditions that have come down to us from the Fathers.”

“ Then,” I said, “ it seems to me that the doctrines of your Church are wholly the result of logical and philosophical deduction based on tradition, but not, as you admit, on revelation. My conclusion, therefore, is, that the institution of the Papacy is a superstructure of that kind, builded upon a large foundation of divine truth.”

He smiled at this characterisation, and said :

“ I thank you for the slight concession that it is founded, at least, upon divine truth. I would like, at other times, to expound these and other topics of the true Church, Captain Marmaduke, for I believe that better acquaintance on your part with the beauty and mystery of the spouse of Christ will present her to your

mind and heart in all the freshness and loveliness which she wears in the sight of faithful Catholics."

"I have in my mind a spouse, Father Terhune," I said, "whose freshness and loveliness are much more easily perceived by an eye like mine,—even Catherine Dillon. I mean to ask her this day to become my wife."

He looked grave and deeply concerned.

"This doth not astonish me," he said. "But it is a serious business. I know something of her mind on this subject. I could not advise her to consent to it unless I thought there were canonical grounds for it."

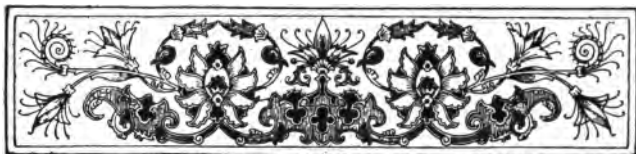
"And what do you call canonical grounds?"

"Canonical grounds would be the justification of a hope in my mind that the beauty and purity of this young girl's life would lead you to embrace the true faith."

"Surely she would be an acceptable teacher," I said.

"Even so," he replied. "You have declared that neither argument nor instruction can win your soul away from the errors in which it is steeped. There is, then, a yet more potent power to turn a chivalrous heart like thine to the truth,—even the power of love."





CHAPTER XXVIII

LOVE OVERCOMETH

THE priest and I walked back to the house in silence, and while he passed up-stairs into the chapel, I sought out Catherine whom I found in the company of Lady Betty and Lord Alfred. All three greeted me with a merry salutation. It was but a moment, however, before they two walked away, leaving me alone with her.

I began to unfold my business without loss of time. I deem it not right to set down here all the words that passed between us. There was pain on both sides, but it was a mutual sweet sorrow which knit our hearts more firmly as it seemed to raise barrier upon barrier against the agreement of our minds. No sooner had I told her again of my fervent love than she renewed all the theological difficulties with which my mother and the priest had overwhelmed me. I reminded her that these were matters of opinion which bore no relation to the question of love. She answered that her religion was so inseparably a part of her life that she could never be happy if united to one who held it in antagonism. I declared that while in the depths of my own soul I could not believe it true, yet it would be a thing of beauty to me always if it served to illuminate her life and conduct as I

felt that it would do. Her reply was that if I believed it false it could never wear the aspect of beauty to me. I told her that love created a sympathy in the heart that was more powerful to hold man and wife together than prejudice could be to separate them. She rejoined that marriage was too holy and close a state to have the parties to it asunder on the one principle which gave it its eternal bond.

"No union would be a true marriage," she declared, while I held both her hands in mine, "which was not cemented by a common faith in the souls of its members."

I renewed all the arguments I had hitherto used to convince her that opinion, religious or other, was a mere matter of the mind, depending largely upon family environment and education ; and I persisted in asserting again and again that love was a divine passion which would not be controlled by expediency, nor by the limitations of human wisdom. I tried, in every manner of statement that I could master, to convince her that the fatherhood of God was the common heritage of humanity, and I appealed to her to remember that we were both equally His creatures, and that both should be equally precious in His sight.

She then said that I was here in arms against her country and her religion, and dwelt with much feeling upon the miseries of the period. Her eyes were now streaming with tears, and she announced that whatever her affection for me might be, the matter which I proposed would be unwise and unpardonable, that it would revolt the friends of both, and that, as it could bring no real happiness to either of us, she would decline to give it further consideration.

She passed from the room, and as I followed her to

the door with wistful eyes I saw her ascend the stairs and enter the chapel.

Lady Betty now returned to the room and told me that Lord Alfred had gone to his ship to see that all was in order there, and that he would return in time for the evening meal. She sat down beside me and talked to me with charming frankness of Lord Alfred and herself. She even hinted at some tender word which Lord Alfred had ventured to address to her, and blushed and laughed when I bantered her on her friendship for him. For ten minutes we chatted on in this fashion, when Lady Betty seized one of my great hands in both of hers, and said :

"Captain John,"—for this was the familiar form of her address,—“your mother has told me your secret. Nay, do not frighten me with your big frown,—she could not help it. I found her in tears, and it was not so difficult for me to guess the cause as dull people might think. But let not prejudice keep you apart. This maiden is one of the loveliest of the creatures of this earth,—as sweet and pure in heart and mind as in her wondrous face. Be not too set in your own opinions, Captain John ; and let me who have been your playmate and climbed upon your mighty shoulders in years gone by, give you a sister's love always and wish you a victory in this new siege which you are pursuing.”

"Betty," I said, "my mother weeps because thou and I have not passed that same sister's love for the higher flame. But it is fate and not ourselves that controls these things. I do indeed love this lady, but her prejudice is invulnerable, and she has said me a distinct No."

"Take not her No for final," laughed Betty, still holding my hand. "I did but now say No to Lord Alfred ;

but if he do not renew his suit with greater ardour this very night I shall die of grief."

At that moment Catherine came into the room and Lady Betty dropped my hand, or, rather, threw it away with an ostentatious confusion, and ran off to my mother's room.

"You are quick to find solace!" said Catherine.

I could not help laughing; appearances were certainly against me, but I made no effort to explain. She patted her foot on the floor and looked anything but pleased. I came up behind her.

"Catherine,—dear Catherine," I pleaded, "Lady Betty was telling me of our play-days of long ago, and took my hand to wish me success in winning you. She herself loves Lord Alfred Paddleford. And nobody loves me, Catherine,—nobody!" And I tried to look clear through her brown eyes.

She looked up at me in a frightened way, then wavered and turned her eyes downward. I whispered a word in her ear. She turned round with her heart beating against mine, threw her arms round my neck, and gave me her kiss. I held her head in the hollow of my hand.

"You do love me?" I asked.

"Better than anybody in the world!"





CHAPTER XXIX

THE WOOING O'T

MY betrothal to Catherine was a bitter-sweet experience from the start. No sooner had I received her slow consent than I became aware of the fact that even in the disposal of her heart she was not a free agent. So I was soon passing back and forth between the room where she sat in tremulous happiness, and the chapel above where Father Terhune stood holding back his ecclesiastical permission to our union until he could assure himself of the sufficiency of his "canonical grounds."

While this important detail of the affair was still in an unsettled condition, supper was announced, and we all met in the banqueting hall. I came in with Catherine, whose soft hand lay somewhat resistingly in mine. There was a maidenly shyness about the usually self-possessed girl which instantly made her an object of sympathetic attention. My mother, who had now recovered the mastery of her emotions, stepped toward us with a loving air, and, taking the brown head in her hands, kissed my sweetheart on the forehead, murmuring the words, "My dear daughter." She then saluted me in the same affectionate manner. This was the signal for general con-

gratulations. Lady Betty followed my mother's action with regard to Catherine, and wrung my hand in both of hers with the unaffected devotion of true friendship. Lord Alfred shook hands with both of us, and said, with a glance at Betty, that he envied me my art in winning the woman of my choice. The priest looked on with a decorous interest.

As for Catherine, I think she was deeply touched by the loyal greeting which my friends had just given her as my promised bride ; and she began to recover her old spirit of happy and ingenuous hospitality.

As we took our positions each at the accustomed chair Betty laughingly forbade me to occupy my old seat, and, taking me by the arm, she led me to her chair next to Catherine and forcibly sat me down in it ; and then took my place herself. This pleased me mightily and gave no offence to Catherine, either. The new arrangement, however, left my mother between Lady Betty and Lord Alfred, and as Betty sat down she looked disappointed for an instant at the separation. My mother, perceiving the situation, rose, and, with a sweet and thoughtful humour, exchanged chairs with Lord Alfred. Catherine's quick wit seized the incident as a happy one for turning attention from ourselves, and she clapped her hands together merrily, I and my mother joining in the demonstration, until Lord Alfred bowed with mock-gravity and Betty blushed and laughed. Our little comedy caught the fancy of the priest, who smiled with a cordial appreciation.

With such an auspicious beginning our meal was enjoyed by all to the end. There was no lack of pointed banter, Lady Betty rather taking the lead in this respect, though Catherine met her attacks with merry rejoinders.

Once when Betty spoke of my contented countenance, Lord Alfred said : " Why should it not be contented ? —a sweetheart wooed and won ! But look at the face of a fellow who has been spurned ! " Whereat he wore such a sad dog's melancholy that we all laughed heartily, including Betty.

When supper was over Lord Alfred took Lady Betty out upon the lawn in the soft gloaming, and I renewed my battle with Father Terhune. He persisted in bringing up all the arguments on religion that I had ever heard, and endeavoured to force particles of his eternal truth to a lodgment in my mind. But he at last yielded, as I think he meant to do all along ; and he declared, with many compliments on my understanding, that he felt sure of his canonical grounds, and that he would marry us whenever we both desired him to do so.

This disposition on his part sent me flying to Catherine's side where I spent the sweetest hour of my life in wooing her to an immediate marriage. She made many pretty objections, put me off again and again with a yielding caress, said that she wanted to try me as a lover before taking me as a husband, protested that a maid must have two months for preparation, declared that she would be an unappreciated wife if she held not off for a season, vowed that my friends would think she was to be had for the asking if she kept me not waiting, warned me that I would repent my rash insistence ; and finally, when I had swept aside every difficulty with my fond pleading and urged her for the love she bore me to become my wife while the slight pause in the war gave a period for honeymooning, she hid her face on my heart and told me she would wed me on the morrow.

When she looked up, she said :

"If you would only wait for a season I would summon my aunt, the Lady Milucra, to come here and direct my wedding. I cannot help feeling forlorn without her. Still, my aunt hath a terrible temper and if she should oppose our marriage it would be better not to have her here.

"If she come at all, then," I replied, "it were better for her to come afterward."

I kept her beside me until her hour for retiring arrived. In the meantime, Lord Alfred and Lady Betty came in out of the chill night air and looked on our hasty and confused aloofness with an appearance of superior decorum, going straightway to an apartment across the hall where I know not whether they acted differently from us. My mother likewise came and kissed us each good night, and went to bed. And when my sweetheart, after many efforts to tear herself from me, succeeded in reaching the door, she came back of her own sweet will to tell me that I was the finest man in the world.





CHAPTER XXX

TELLING THE SECRET TO THE IRONSIDES

PERHAPS there is no man who has slept in his habitual soundness on the night preceding his marriage. Certainly I did not, for I tossed through some of the long hours in a conflict of emotions in which the fear of criticism, and an apprehension of the penalties of persistence in a headstrong passion first mastered my mind and then gave way to hope, and tenderness, and the very affluence of true love. Sleep came at last, however, and I was held fast in a refreshing slumber until a note from Will Cozen's horn gave a jocund welcome to the breaking day, and I sprang from my couch to see the first rim of the sun form a golden arch on the placid sea.

Going at once to Roderick's Pool, I plunged in its cool waters and felt myself restored by an ample bath. I then put on my soldier's things, and, returning to the close, bade my trumpeter call the Ironsides together. No man had yet broken his fast, and they wondered much at their assembling at such an unwonted hour. But the last trooper fell in line without a word. I then had both the gates thrown open and ordered the gallant fellows to forward march.

I led them in silence the distance of two furlongs from

the house, and then halted them with an order to break ranks. They gathered round me with much wonderment in their faces, but no man spoke. I asked them to seat themselves on the green sward, which they did ; and then I addressed them.

"Troopers," I said, "you have followed me into danger so many times that I cannot go into the most supreme happiness that God permits a man to undertake without craving you to be the sharers of my joy."

I could see that there was much bewilderment in this speech, although some must have understood the disclosure that was coming. But the sentiment won them, and I read sympathy and trust in every countenance.

"Troopers, I am going to be married to-day provided I can gain the approval of my comrades-in-arms. Need I tell you to whom? English soldiers have vigilant eyes. You must all know without my telling you that it is Miss Catherine Dillon."

Now, when I spoke of marrying, every man looked happy, for it is an oft-repeated maxim that "All the world loves a lover." But when I mentioned Catherine's name there was a distinct air of disappointment which suddenly led me to think they had expected my bride's name would be Lady Betty Forrester. This gave me a set-back, and for a moment I was at a loss what to say.

"Troopers," I said, at last, "I know that there is a prejudice amongst some of you against mixed marriages. Doubtless a general opinion of that kind is sound and wise. But every rule hath its exception. Where there is true love there can be no dissension. You have all seen what a noble lady this is,—how patient and noble in the adversities of life. She has won my heart entirely. Now, the results of our invasion here have

deprived her of the protection and companionship of both father and brother. Her situation is most lonely and desolate. That is not why I love her, but that is why I think it expedient to have our marriage take place at once. What say you, gallant comrades?"

I then sat down.

Joe Muzzycroft slowly arose and looked over the assembly. He began to speak in his heavy, deliberate manner, thus :

"It needs me not to say, nor any man, that our Captain is beloved by us, even as a father. He hath acted most handsomely in asking our counsel in this affair. Perhaps we don't like her being a Papist,—but perhaps that does n't count in this case, as the Captain has perhaps truly said. In anything affecting our Captain we stand as one man." And honest Joe sat down.

Loftus Pearson stood up. "As one man truly," he said. "But we must give good counsel to a brother. Now is it right?—that is the question. Yea, is it right?"

"What will Old Noll say to it?" asked Luke Marvin.

Now, that was the question that had been running through my brain ever since this love had become a potent force in my life. But Hugh Brewer answered the question promptly.

"Old Noll, indeed!" said Hugh. "Old Noll loves no officer in his army above Captain Marmaduke. And why? Because he knows him to be brave, and loyal, and wise. Yea, our Captain is wise and would do no rash thing; and Old Noll will frown and then say the Captain knows his own welfare best. Old Noll will be the first man after ourselves to pray for God's blessing upon our Captain's marriage. Won't he, boys?"

There was a unanimous shout of affirmation to this

appeal. The cause was nearly won. But Joe Muzzycroft again stood up, and said :

"There is just one thing we would all like to know, perhaps. Our counsel to the Captain will then be of the soundest texture, perhaps. What does Lady Marmaduke, thy mother, think of this?"

This was a bold question, but not beyond the bounds which our soldiers allowed themselves, and it struck the curiosity of every man of them.

"That might carry us for or against it," said Loftus Pearson.

"My mother," I said, standing up, "discussed the matter with me most thoroughly yesterday. She had some doubts even as you yourselves have had. But when she found that it was the profound desire of my heart to wed this lady, she gave her free consent and blessed us both."

"Do you hear that, boys?" asked Muzzycroft. "His mother gave him her free consent and her blessing. Are we to be more arbitrary than his mother?"

"Assuredly, not I!" said Loftus Pearson.

"Nor I," said Luke Marvin.

"His mother is a good lady, firm in the faith," said Hugh Brewer. "I take my stand with his mother."

"Boys," said Joe Muzzycroft, "shall we give the Captain our consent and our blessing even as his mother has done?"

Then one and all shouted Aye. The reluctant manner which had marked the discussion gave way to sincere enthusiasm. As many of them as could reach me grasped my hand and uttered cordial congratulations. Then they gave me a hearty cheer, and then,—what pleased me most of all,—some one cried out :

"A cheer for the Captain's sweetheart!" And it was given with the full power of stout English lungs.

"Fall in!" I cried, laughing in the happiness of their good-will. "Fall in, every trooper of you, and we will back to breakfast. And if Rob Cumber have not the best meal in Ireland set ready for us we will no longer praise his skill as nonesuch in this army! I mean to take breakfast with you this day. Forward, March!"

Our march back to Carberry Hall was a joyous walk in good-fellowship. Arrived there I sent word within that I would breakfast with my men but would rejoin the household as soon as it was over. Rob Cumber was ready for us. It was only a moment before he heard the secret. And we all plunged into our meal with the zest that comes from the infectious happiness of an approaching wedding.





CHAPTER XXXI

WHOM GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER

AS soon as I had finished the morning meal with my devoted comrades I went inside and met the members of the household just coming from their rooms for their own breakfast. My mother, wearing a happy face, kissed me tenderly, and Lady Betty whispered in my ear that all was fixed between Lord Alfred and herself. Lord Alfred now came ashore from his ship, and he and Lady Betty received congratulations from us all upon their betrothal.

Catherine greeted me with a radiant blush. Nothing would do but I must go in to breakfast with them, and so we renewed in the noble banqueting hall the merry fellowship of the night before.

Breakfast over, Catherine and I retired to our respective apartments to prepare for the great event. Lady Betty went with Catherine, declaring that she alone would be the bride's maid. Lord Alfred followed me and was as attentive as a French valet could have been in assisting me to look my best.

Indeed it required all Lord Alfred's art to make me even a respectable bridegroom. Before I came to the wars my wardrobe had all the things which a young gen-

tleman of my station could wish. But the art of dress is soon forgotten by an earnest soldier. The one suit of clothes which I had worn up to this time was no better than it should be, as the reader who has followed my turbulent adventures will readily imagine. Fortunately, my camp-chest contained a suit of black velvet, besides a sufficient store of linen of very good quality, and I was soon arrayed in a ruffled shirt, a broad white collar with a piece of lace over it, and wristbands of lace. Instead of my buff-leather coat and breeches I donned my velvet suit, with a pair of grey-silk stockings, while my trooper's boots gave place to a pair of shoes with silver buckles. My hair was not so short as most of our party wore it, whereby they had earned from the Cavaliers the contemptuous name of Roundheads. It fell to my collar-band and turned upward, and, as there was a healthy growth of it, I brushed and combed it with much care. A close use of the razor left my face smooth and ruddy, and when I had finished my toilet Lord Alfred told me I would pass for a King's courtier only there were now no King nor courtiers left. But his praise was overdrawn, for I was simply a gentleman and looked nothing more.

We went into the drawing-room where my mother in her best dress was waiting for me. Lord Alfred left me alone with her and she talked very solicitously about my approaching change of state. By no word did she renew the doubting of her talk of the previous day, but all her thoughts were now of my happiness, and all her suggestions bore upon the best means of attaining it. She charged me to love my wife above every object on earth, but not her religion. She implored me to preserve the dignity and purity of my mind, and to be gentle and patient with my wife in every circumstance of our union.

I must set an example, she said, of good character, and should aim to have a mind above prejudice in little things, that thereby a wife might add exalted respect to love's devotion. She told me that my wife would never give up her religion and I must not influence her to do so, but that a proper and modest fidelity to principle in both of us would do much to break down prejudices which might otherwise bring infelicity into our home. And then Lady Betty, herself dressed out in gay attire, ran into the room clapping her hands, and announced that the bride was here.

In the doorway stood Catherine. Never before saw I womanhood in brilliant beauty to equal hers. She wore a flowing gown of white velvet which had been made for some recent festal occasion but never worn until now. Its front was embossed with silver and the sides and neck were garnished with fine lace. Its ample sleeves were slashed with taffeta, and a diamond brooch held it together at her throat. Her brown hair was parted in the middle and fell in curls behind her ears. Her slippers were of white silk, and she wore a veil of lace which had been her mother's. All her physical loveliness seemed to be increased by a mental and spiritual charm that made her a vision of perfect beauty. I took her hands, and while my mother and Lady Betty passed compliments upon her from the other side of the room, I whispered some words into her willing ears and was repaid by a happy smile.

Lord Alfred came in and told us the priest was in the banquetting hall.

It had been my request to Father Terhune and to Catherine that out of respect to the prejudices of my associates the ceremony should be performed in the

banqueting hall instead of the chapel, and to this they had yielded a ready compliance.

I sent a servant to summon all my officers, whom I had previously bidden to the wedding. Presently they came, looking their best. I had also caused it to be made known to the troopers that I would be glad to have them attend, in so far as the room would hold them, and Lord Alfred announced that the last man of them was in the banqueting hall or at its windows outside.

Catherine had likewise ordered her entire household to attend upon the services, and the amiable Lord Alfred informed her that they, too, were there.

All, therefore, being in readiness, I handed my mother and Lady Betty to Lord Alfred, my officers formed in line behind them, and I took Catherine on my arm and led the procession into the banqueting hall. The Ironsides were there in expectancy and childish interest, and likewise the Irish household ; but they had left an aisle open between them, and through this we stepped to the farther end of the room where stood the priest. We stopped before him, I and my bride, while behind us my friends grouped themselves in a half-circle.

Catherine bowed her head and the priest began to utter the solemn service. When he came to the words, "Who giveth this woman away?" I felt that the beautiful girl was suppressing an outburst of woe, for there was no kinsman of hers in life to perform this sacred office. Lord Alfred, as had been previously arranged, stepped forward and took the part here designated, placing her hand in mine ; and when, in a few moments afterward, the priest declared us man and wife, I whispered in her ear the word, "Forever!"

It would have afforded me gratification to take each friend and follower by the hand ; but this would have been an indelicate ordeal to put upon my wife, so we turned and walked back to the drawing-room in the same order in which we had left it. Then my officers congratulated me and were acknowledged by my wife by an inclination of the head ; they then withdrew. With their disappearance the spirits of the rest of us were relaxed. The priest was now with us. He shook our hands. My mother kissed us both, and so did Lady Betty, being permitted so to favour me by the smiling assent of my wife. Betty looked at me archly and sang the old rhyme :

“Needles and pins, needles and pins,
When a man's married his trouble begins.”

Lord Alfred uttered some well-chosen words, and again said, with a look at Betty, that he envied me my success.

The Irish men-at-arms and all the servants of the place came into the room and were greeted kindly by both Catherine and myself. They then withdrew, and after a period of conversation, Balor MacLuga announced that the wedding feast was set, and we again passed into the banqueting hall. We partook of the most sumptuous feast that I had eaten in Ireland, and with sufficient merriment for the occasion, too. Catherine had ordered that the meal be made ample enough to feed all the inhabitants of the place, so that the Ironsides were the guests of the occasion together with her own household.

The dinner finished, we retired to our apartments as before and put off the wedding finery. My mother was firm in her intention to return to Dublin in the ship that

day, although there would be no opportunity for them to go to England for a week. Accordingly, at six o'clock in the afternoon, she and Lady Betty prepared to depart from Carberry Hall. When all was made ready, Catherine and I accompanied them down to the shore and bade them farewell. I handed them into the boat to Lord Alfred, and the hardy sailors rowed them out to the ship. Their anchor was soon hoist, all sail was spread, and under a favouring breeze the frigate glided northward. The sun was sinking in autumn splendour as the gallant ship increased her way. My mother and Lady Betty stood at the rail throwing kisses and waving a tearful adieu, which we returned. Soon the ship was a mere outline, and then a speck in the gathering darkness. We stood there, hand in hand, looking out to sea until it had passed beyond the line of vision. Day had departed and night marked her presence on the sparkling sky.

The air was growing chill. We were alone, and I folded my beautiful wife in my arms and kissed her.

"Forever!" I said, looking deep down into her eyes.

"Yes, forever!" she answered.

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CHAPTER XXXII

THE DRAGON COMES BACK

THE two weeks that followed my marriage to Catherine were the happiest of my life. Every hour developed some new beauty in her character which held me in a fresh fascination. Most unreservedly she gave me her whole heart and all the confidence of her mind, and each moment brought its variety in a woman's charm of dalliance, of laughter, or of love.

Daily we sought out all the solitudes of the place. Under the green trees, or beside the Lake of Darvra, or down by the surging sea, or in the Dragon's Den, we wended our frequent way. I saw her in a hundred moods a day, and every mood I liked more than that which preceded it. When I protested that those who were rich in love should abound in favours to humble suitors, she raised her finger with an assumption of severity and reminded me that I was all too bold to be a deserving object of charity. When I threw myself at her feet she would stroke my hair and tell me she was proud of her captive lion. Then she would sit down beside me, place her hand in mine, and tell me one of her Irish legends with a most captivating manner and intelligence.

And so we played our comedy day by day in all its delightful and tender variation. So we lived in the sunshine of our joy. So our souls drew nearer into perfect accord. So we journeyed the short, sweet days of our honeymoon; thinking ourselves, in the perfection of love, apart from the world, and forgetting the warning of Job that man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.

I have spoken hitherto of Catherine's aunt, the Lady Milucra O'Fergus, who dwelt in the south of Ireland. She was the only near relative of my wife's now living; and the apprehension of the invasion of our army into Munster had caused her to forsake her home near Youghal, in the county of Cork, and come to Carberry Hall, with a retinue of some twenty followers and servants.

Arrived there, she was much astounded and dismayed to learn the eventful incidents of the past month. She loudly bewailed the death of her brother and her nephew; she was deeply resentful of the occupation of this estate by the force under my command; and she burst into uncontrollable fury when informed of the amazing marriage between Catherine and myself.

"What!" she cried, in high rage, sweeping up and down the room whither Catherine had taken her to tell her of these things, and in my full hearing where I sat outside under the open window. "What! Married, you say, to the Captain of these Puritan cutthroats? Married to the slayer of your father and your brother? Married to the despoiler of your home? Married to a Protestant? I will not believe it! A Dillon would not do it!" And the fat lady stood in front of my wife with flaming eyes.

"Nevertheless, Aunt Milucra," said Catherine, "it is true."

"Thy father would have cast thee out!" cried the other. "Has this tall Englishman thrown a spell over you? Know you not that he murdered your race and then coerced you into marriage to possess himself of your great house and broad lands?"

"That cannot be, aunt," answered my wife. "He had no part in the killing of my father and he would have protected him had he been present. As for my brother, he was slain cruelly by our countryman, Lord Kilmac, while attempting under my husband's leadership, to rescue me from that villain."

"Your husband, indeed!" shouted Lady Milucra. "A bigoted adventurer, a penniless wanderer, a traitor to his King and country at home, a foe to your family and religion in Ireland, a very pauper come here for a crust, I'll warrant you, and laughing in his sleeve to have tricked a silly heiress into marriage. Shame upon you, Kate! I did not think you capable of it!"

"Your rage beseems not the occasion, aunt," cried Catherine, indignantly. "The case is far different from what you have described. My husband comes from one of the oldest families in England. He is nephew to the King's bravest general, Sir Marmaduke Langdale. He has inherited from his father an estate in Yorkshire vastly larger than mine. He has houses in many where I have but this and the few outlying. He is a brave soldier, one who overcometh every enemy. Above all, he is the kindest and gentlest man alive, and I ask the Blessed Virgin every day to have him spared to me through her intercession!"

Now, there was much in this loyal speech of my wife's

that caused me wonder. I had never said a word to her of my family connections, nor of my uncle, Sir Marma-
duke, nor of my houses and lands. Who could have
given her the information? Certainly not my mother,
who was as much averse to speaking of personal matters
as myself. It could have been no other then, than Lady
Betty.

"The Blessed Virgin will have better wisdom than
that," said the aunt, with a harsh laugh. "I doubt
if she will lend a willing ear to one who has been so
neglectful of the interests of the true religion. Where,
let me ask you, were the priests of this household when
this vicious marriage was pressed on? Where was
Father O'Brien?"

"Father O'Brien was hanged," said Catherine, in an
embarrassed tone.

"Hanged! and by whom?"

"By an English soldier,—the Scoutmaster—the
fanatical wretch who slew my father."

"Mother of God!" yelled the aunt, throwing herself
on the floor and tearing at her hair in the very insanity
of rage. "Did I ever think to hear words like these
spoken by an Irish woman! A holy priest hanged, and
you married to his murderer! Blessed Virgin, sweep this
man from the earth,—drive him from the habitation of
men,—take away his wife from his side,—give him no
child to caress with his love,—curse him with eternal
solitude,—give him reproach in his days and anguish in
his nights,—cut him off from the field of his delight,—
and curse him, curse him, curse him!"

I sprang from my chair and peered into the room.
The Irish woman was rolling back and forth over the
floor, spitting out her fearful words with venomous hate,

tearing at her hair, and rolling her eyes with the uncontrolled fury of madness. Catherine was tugging at her shoulders in a vain effort to restore her to a decorous behaviour. Suddenly the tall priest entered the room, in horror at the woman's ravings.

"Silence!" he cried, with that air of stern authority which I had seen him assume on other occasions with successful results. "Silence, my lady! What blasphemy is this you are using! Words like these are not for a Christian's utterance or hearing. Know you, then," he continued, as he raised the panting and hysterical creature to a chair, "that this marriage was performed by me, justified, as I verily believe, by canonical grounds, and likely to do good not only to those who are joined by it, but likewise to our country itself through the influence of this brave Captain Marmaduke. I pray you, Lady Milucra," he said, as matters began to shape themselves into better order, "do not use such harsh terms in the presence of a newly wedded wife. They bring only pain to a loving heart like Catherine's. This husband of hers is an exceptional man,—believe me, he is. Catherine will in due time strive for his conversion. I have already, at her earnest supplication, said three masses for his reconciliation to the true faith. I pray you, my lady, walk aside with me,—the air will revive you."

The tall priest led the gasping Lady Milucra out of the room and into the front-yard. Catherine ran out by another door, and, seeking my side, threw herself upon my breast. Her nerves were completely unstrung and she burst into a torrent of tears. When I had soothed her into a partial quietude, and the sobs came as from a tired child whose grief is spent, she said:

"Oh, it was such a terrible scene, John. I hope I

may never see another like it ! But I bless God that you were not there to hear her words ? ”

“ Never mind, my darling,” I said, resolved not to inform her that I had heard them all. “ Do not think of them again. Let us off to the Dragon’s Den and I will tell you the tale of the Patient Griselda. There ! ”

We were soon in our retreat, and I told her the story. But her aunt’s words would somehow not out of my mind. When I had finished my narrative, Catherine thanked me, and, looking round the cave, expressed a wonder whether the dragon which used to inhabit this den would ever come back to Carberry Hall.

“ It was a terrible creature,” she said. “ It carried off many for its prey, and, of course, it thereby caused the separation of many lovers.”

Then she asked :

“ Do you think the dragon will ever come back to Carberry Hall ? ”

I made no answer. The cruel words of Lady Milucra O’Fergus were still ringing in my ears, and I asked myself whether the dragon was not already back in a new shape.





CHAPTER XXXIII

THE EVIL DAYS COME

WHEN my wife had entirely recovered from the agitation into which her aunt's vicious conduct had thrown her, I brought her out of the Dragon's Den, and we walked back to the Hall. Arrived at the gate I was informed by Lieutenant Waters that Scoutmaster David Potton had just arrived with a letter for me from the camp. Not wishing my wife to see Potton, I took her within the house and quickly came out and sent for the Scoutmaster to attend me on the lawn.

I must own that my mind was in anything but a quiet state at this moment. On the day following my marriage I had despatched a letter to General Cromwell telling him of that important occurrence. I had framed my communication with great care, hoping that a frank and full relation of the matter would disarm his prejudice ; and had concluded with an avowal of my desire to be useful in the development of his military policy so soon as there might be further need for my services. A fortnight had passed away without a word of reply, and I began to fear that my punishment for marrying a Catholic wife against the narrow opinion of the times was to consist of silence and oblivion while the great war swept

on without me. The Scoutmaster's arrival with a letter marked, therefore, an epoch of good or evil influence on this incident of my career, and I was in a fever of impatience until he stood before me.

"Welcome, David," I said, grasping his hand. "Is thy message good or ill?"

"Ill, I fear," he answered. "Your marriage threw the General into a rage the like of which no member of his staff hath ever seen him in before."

My heart sank within me like lead at this announcement from my blunt subordinate. The worst, then, was to be feared.

"Give me the letter," I said.

I tore it open and read it with a sickening sensation. It was brief and terrible. "You will at once," it said, "send every man now under your charge to me at Drogheda. They are much needed. Thyself will be sent for when occasion calls." And then came the signature of the great Puritan.

My hand trembled and I felt myself white at the lips. The emotion that stirred me was quite unlike anything I had ever experienced before.

"David," I said, making a great effort to speak without breaking down, "Lieutenant Elijah Haddon is the ranking officer after me. Bid him gather the men for a march to the camp."

"All?" he asked.

"The last man," I said, and passed into the house.

Catherine caught me in her arms and gave me wine.

"What is it, my beloved?" she cried.

"Read," I said, and threw myself into a chair.

My wife read the letter, and read it again. Then, coming to me, she said, "How unjust; how very unjust!"

Now, the loving dignity of Catherine's demeanour in this hour of my total ruin somewhat amazed me. I had looked for a burst of fury, a storm of invective, against the action of my General. But here was only a woman's sigh, which meant the more because it was a sigh. This conduct was so unlike her that it roused me from the lethargy of despair into which I had fallen. I drew her to her knees before me and stroked her brown hair.

"Oh, Catherine," I said, "this action of the General's hath cut my life in two."

She clasped one of my great hands in both of hers and looked up at me.

"Nay," she said, "this is but to try your spirit. If this General be the man of tender heart and lofty mind that you have so often pictured to me, he cannot maintain his unjust stand against you."

A trumpet sounded in the yard.

"Listen!" I cried, rising and lifting her to her feet. "That bugle hath called me to the battle a hundred times. And now they go without me. Oh, rank injustice! Intolerable bigotry! The man to whom I have given a soldier's devotion deserts me now, and leaves me alone!"

"Alone, Captain Marmaduke?" demanded my wife.

"Yea, alone," I answered, passionately, "and defenceless in an enemy's country!"

Lieutenant Haddon entered and saluted me.

"The men are assembled, Captain," said he.

"Are all there?" I asked.

"The last one," he replied.

"Then you will march them for Drogheda immediately and report to General Cromwell. The Scoutmaster will guide you."

My men were not used to questioning my commands. But Haddon stood stock still.

"And you, Captain?" he inquired.

"I shall remain here. I pray you, go at once."

A look of ill-concealed contempt gathered in his face. My sensitive mind instantly read his thought.

"Elijah Haddon," I cried, "I am not staying here in love's dalliance. I am displaced in my office by General Cromwell's order. My marriage hath mortally offended him. Will that suffice thy curiosity?"

"Impossible," said Haddon. "Old Noll hath been led to it by some enemy of yours."

"Whether or no," I answered, "the thing is done. You are in command, and I beg you to go at once."

"The men will never go without you," he said, and left the room.

I paced up and down the floor with a hundred passions in my heart, but never looked at the woman who stood like a statue with her eyes fixed upon me. I heard some words among the men outside. Then Haddon again came in.

"The men refuse to march by any order but yours," he said.

"Did you tell them I am displaced?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Then return to them."

He passed out and I raised the window. The men were in ranks, mounted, and facing me. When they caught sight of me they gave me a great cheer.

"To your place Captain," cried Joe Muzzycroft. "We will follow no leader but you."

"Lead us to Drogheda, Captain," said Hugh Brewer, "and Noll will tell you he did but jest."

"Lieutenant Haddon," I said, "you will ride to the rear."

He did so, and the men, misapprehending my purpose, cheered again.

"Lieutenant Waters and Lieutenant-Scoutmaster Potton," I cried, "to the rear!"

They promptly obeyed the order, and the men gave another shout of approval.

"No man in this troop has ever yet refused to obey an order from me," I said.

"And none ever will!" said Loftus Pearson.

"Then hear me, men," I continued. "The General is displeased and hath removed me——"

"Only for a time, we pray God!" came from Hugh Brewer.

"I know not as to that," I shouted. "But he himself needs you at Drogheda. I bid you farewell, and hope some day to lead you again in battle. Forward, right about face,—away!" And, as they turned, they found Lieutenants Haddon and Waters at their front, and the Scoutmaster, too, in which posture they set forward with dejected faces, and rode through the gates of Carberry Hall. When the last of the Ironsides had disappeared, Balor MacLuga shut the gates and locked them, and he and half a dozen of the Irish servants cut a caper in the yard for very joy at their deliverance. The tall priest walked across the grass and mounted the wall to watch the departing cavalcade; and I heard a coarse shout of triumph from Lady Milucra O'Fergus at an upper window. Again I paced the floor in agony.

"They are gone!" I cried. "The brave hearts who have fought beside me through all these wars are gone. The comrades of many years have deserted me. My

ambition is stricken down, my life is ruined. And all for what ? ”

“ Captain Marmaduke,—stop ! ”

Catherine was a raging fury in my path. We stood facing each other.

“ You are speaking as if life held no duty but to slay the Irish people ! ” she cried. “ Do you regret the step you have taken ? Are you so soon tired of the marriage to which your vows of eternal love led me rashly to consent ? Would you have your freedom and your toy soldiers back again ? Yonder is your horse. Mount him, then, and away after your Ironsides ;—you can soon overtake them, and your fine General will pardon you when you do acknowledge that you have forsaken your Catholic wife.”

I looked at her ashamed, but not knowing what I had said.

“ Pray tell me, sir,” she cried, “ if there be no solace for you in cherishing a wife ? Is all this fond love which you have given me to die away and be but the memory of a dream ? Is the boundary of your mind so circumscribed that when your sword is taken from your hand life holds no further charm ? Is this the high manhood which won my girl’s fancy, and do I find you unmasked and without resource when you are no longer free to fight my countrymen ? ”

“ Oh, Catherine,” I cried, and would have taken her to my heart, but she held away. “ I know not what I have said. Have I hurt thy love or wounded thee ? Reproach me no further, dear wife, but think of my honour gone.”

“ You said you were alone and defenceless in an enemy’s country. I would kill with my own hand that

countryman of mine who would harm a hair of your head. But no true Irishman would offer violence to the husband of Catherine Dillon. I am here ; therefore you are not alone, and my country cannot be the country of my husband's enemy. Say you did not mean those words, John."

I said I did not mean them, and she kissed me. Then, in spite of all my years and of all my strength, I sank at her feet in such a burst of grief as would have shamed a silly girl. She took my head in her lap, giant that I was, and said things that a woman might say to a baby. After a while, I forgot my sorrow, and, with my head on her heart, drank in her little speeches gratefully ; for there is no adversity so sharp but a true woman's love can take away its sting.





CHAPTER XXXIV

AFTER THE IRONSIDES

THE real tragedy of life is not death, which is merely a final sleep, but the searing of the living heart by the hot iron of adversity.

My displacement in the army was a crushing blow to my ambition, and it gave me a great deal of mental distress. But the misfortune, overpowering though it was, nevertheless taught me how insecure are worldly place and honour, and how vain the fever that leads men to seek for them. Then, too, I observed that my reverses brought Catherine and myself into a closer sympathy, and the patient and comforting power of her affection made me value her love more highly than ever.

But two or three days of the aimless life which followed after the departure of the Ironsides from Carberry Hall forced upon my attention a great change in my treatment at the hands of all save Catherine. Lady Milucra O'Fergus assailed my ears with violent sarcasm whenever we met at meals or elsewhere. Balor MacLuga addressed me only when necessary, and then with but scant courtesy. Finn and Oscar, his fellow-servants, dared to laugh behind my back, as I discovered on at least one occasion when Catherine turned suddenly and

struck one of them a blow on the cheek. And even Father Terhune seemed to regard me as a dependent on Catherine's hospitality, and he, too, though ever polite, had but little to say to me.

It was simply impossible that I could long endure such a position. My wife did all she could to hide from me these signs of vanished respect, and I divined that she had high words with more than one of the inhabitants of the house in my behalf. But one week after my troop had gone away I took her to our room and told her that, despite of General Cromwell's order, I meant to go at once to the English camp at Drogheda and seek service there. She used all her art to dissuade me from my resolution ; but finding me firm she confessed that she herself was unhappy in the great change that had come over my spirit, and since I was set on going she would consent, but would herself accompany me.

Now, this was the last thing in life that I desired her to do. The dangers of the journey to the camp would be considerable, and my arrival there would doubtless be attended by humiliation and insult. I told her these things with grave concern and urged upon her that under the circumstances she could please me no better than by staying at home and trusting to the near future to bring us together in a better fortune.

"I pray you, my dear husband, save your breath," she cried, drawing my face so close to her own that my visaged care seemed to vanish before the light of her love, "save your breath, for you will die for lack of it, some day. You stir not from my house unless I be with you. I shall ride in my boy's dress, and if there be adventures on the way, you will be right glad to have my sword beside your own."

"But, Catherine," I said, "you are safe here, while on the road you will not be safe. Then, Captain Marmaduke and his wife will scarcely receive that distinguished treatment which once I fondly hoped for your sake would be accorded to us when I would take you before our General."

"As to my safety," she answered, "I value it not a penny without you,—nay, nor my life either. As for honours, I court them not from this invading army. And so, reserve your further objections, dear John, and let us both prepare to depart."

Seeing that there was nothing for it but to take her with me, I bade her prepare for the journey ; and while she was gone into an adjoining room, I put on my back-and breast, my helmet, boots, and sword, and felt a man again. When I had completed my accoutrement, the door opened and my wife entered, rigged out in the smartest man's suit I had yet beheld upon her. Buff boots came above her knee and were met by a pair of scarlet velvet breeches. A belt strapped around her lace shirt carried her sword. She wore a doublet of scarlet velvet to match the breeches, and a flowing black cloak over her shoulders. On her head was a white hat and feather, while white leathern gauntlets covered her hands.

As she came before me she threw back her head with a saucy air, drew her sword, and gave me a military salute. Then, returning the blade to its scabbard, she ran forward and kissed me. Our design to go abroad had put her in a merry humour, and she laughed and teased until we should start away.

Catherine had put some necessary things of comfort into a parcel, and, as the weather was becoming cold,

she gave me a great cloak that had belonged to her father. She then sent an order out to saddle Dick and Bess. When all was ready we started to go to the door, and, as we came upon the step, in front of which stood the two horses, Father Terhune and Lady Milucra blocked our farther progress.

"What means that immodest dress, Kate?" demanded my wife's aunt. "Where are you going on a man's saddle?"

"I am going with my husband for a ride," returned Catherine, her cheek colouring because of the opposition implied in these questions.

"Where?" demanded her aunt. Then, as no answer came from Catherine, she turned to me, and, lashing herself into an instant fury, cried out:

"English pauper! Whither would you take her?"

"I know of no reason why I should answer you," I said, eying her sternly, "neither do I know of any reason why I should not answer you. I am taking my wife for a ride, mainly because she will not stay here without me. As to our destination, if she tell it not, neither will I, but we will likely be away for some days."

"Mother of God," yelled the Irish woman, "must I hear such insolence from a slave? Kate! Will you suffer it to your own flesh and blood? Send him away with a good riddance, and return you to the confidence and affection of your family. It is high time he were begging his way at the next house!"

Catherine would have spoken a fierce reply, but I raised my hand to bid her silence. She sprang indignantly upon her horse, and I mounted Dick. Then the priest spoke.

"Catherine," said he, "I think it not well that you ride

abroad in such troublous times lacking a sufficient escort."

"But I have a sufficient escort, father," she replied. "John," she continued to me in a low voice, "let us away."

Our horses set out at a brisk walk. Then we heard the shrill voice of Lady Milucra O'Fergus.

"Balor MacLuga," she cried, "to the gate, quick, and close it! I and Father Terhune will control here until my young lady recovers her duty."

Balor MacLuga and half a dozen Irish men-at-arms started on a run for the gate. Lady Milucra had declared war, and I knew that her hatred of me would be no longer restrained if she carried her point now.

"Quick, John!" cried Catherine, setting spurs to her horse. "Quick, or we are lost!"

I dashed after her and we reached the gate just as Balor MacLuga was in the act of swinging it shut. Perceiving that he could not close it in time to intercept us, and being urged on by the angry and excited commands of Lady Milucra, he threw himself and his men across the roadway, and they sought to grasp our bridles. At a word from me Dick rose in the air and threw himself against two of our assailants, passing over them as they rolled into the road. Turning my horse, I saw Balor MacLuga seize Catherine's bridle while Lady Milucra hastened down the green lawn as fast as her weight of flesh would permit her, the tall priest coming behind.

"Would you betray your mistress?" cried Catherine to Balor MacLuga. "Then take a beating for your treachery!"

She attempted to bring the flat of her sword down

across his shoulder ; but in her trepidation her aim was not good and the sharp edge of the blade passed close to the Irishman's head and cut off his left ear. He released his hold upon her horse and howled with pain, and Catherine spurred Bess to my side.

"On !" she cried, her face now white as death. "Away from so much ingratitude. They will kill you if they stop us again. On, on !"

As we spurred away we heard the hot maledictions of Lady Milucra and the serving-men, and, as I looked over my shoulder, I saw the tall priest gazing after us with an immobile face, while all the others made gestures of impotent rage.

There were no indications that a pursuit was intended, yet I deemed it well that we ride on at a good pace until we had gone north ten miles. Then we drew our horses to a walk and began to talk of the matter that was uppermost in our hearts.

"John," said Catherine, giving me her hand to hold as we jogged along the green hillside, "if you had gone away from Carberry Hall without me, as you proposed to do, we never should have met again on earth."

"Nonsense," I said.

"Nay, but it is true. They were already attempting to undermine my loyalty to you. Your fall from power carried down their fear of you, which was all that held them in any semblance of respect. When they found my heart true in its love they contemplated putting a restraint upon my liberty, and were concocting I know not what evil for yourself. Had you come away alone they never would have permitted us to meet again."

"My sweet girl !" I cried, pressing her hand to my lips. "You are indeed a loyal and true wife to follow

me out into the world when I am hunted and friendless. But never fear ; I shall conquer the world for you yet, Catherine. Our love shall yet see peace and prosperity, let us hope, in God's favour."

My wife crossed herself and murmured a prayer.

"Know you the road to Drogheda?" I asked.

"In a general way, yes," she answered, "though I have never been farther north than Dublin. We shall follow the coast road for twenty miles and then strike inland, passing Dublin in a wide circumference. Then straight north some five-and-twenty miles and we shall come upon your army. There are both tories and wolves in these parts."

"I like not that. What garrisons shall we pass?"

"No English, certainly," she said, "and as for the Irish, they are farther inland, I think. The road we take should be free from any but the natives, or, perhaps, a straying band from your side or mine."

"And be they English or Irish," I said, "it were better we do not meet them until you and I shall have tried our fortunes at the camp."

"When shall we reach Drogheda?" she asked.

"To-morrow in the early afternoon, if no mishap befall," I replied. "Our horses are rested and here is a fine stretch of road. Shall we speed on?"

"I am ready."

"Do you love me?"

"With all my heart."

I released her hand and we set off again at our best speed. When we had covered another five miles Catherine drew her rein and called to me to halt.

"I am tired, John," she said, "and very hungry. Is it not time for supper?"

"The sun and our stomachs both say Yes," I replied. "The country thus far has seemed almost without inhabitants. It grows more wild and desolate as we press on. Let us ride slowly and look sharp for shelter and a good supper."

"Where shall we stay all night?"

"Under the first roof,—of friend if we can win him ; of foe if we can conquer him."

My wife heaved a sigh of fatigue. She was not usually so soon wearied, and I attributed her impaired endurance to the worry which had weighed upon her mind.

A turn in the road brought us in sight of a small and rude hovel built of boughs and earth against a hillside.

"It is a tory's house," cried Catherine. "Let us avoid it."

"We will accost it," I answered. "You must have a place for repose."

We rode straight up to it, and I called out to know if there was anyone within.

The door was soon opened, and a gaunt and horrid hag looked out at us with forbidding suspicion.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" she demanded, in a shrill voice.

"We are wayfarers," I said, "I and my page, and we are famished. Get us some supper, my good woman, and silver and our thanks shall reward you."

"I want not your silver, nor your thanks, either," she said, angrily, "and no supper may an English soldier have here ! Buddagh Sassanach !" And with that she disappeared, banging the door in our faces.

The tears sprang to Catherine's eyes.

"What are we to do?" she asked.

My only answer was to dismount and kick the door

off its leather hinges with one thrust of my foot. The woman came forward screaming Celtic oaths, and beside her was a fierce cur which aimed his fangs at me until I gave him my boot and sent him into a corner of the room with the breath all out of him.

"Hear me, woman," I cried. "I have used fair words without avail, and now I will bring you to book with authority. Get a supper for this youth and myself instantly, or I will burn this nest about your ears. Quick! What say you?"

"If I must, I must," she said, shrinking before my fierce gaze. "But I will make it so hot 't will burn your tongue." This was said as she drew away from me toward the peat fire in the corner.

"As hot as you will," I said, laughing as I beheld Catherine's pleasure in our seeming success. Then, as a savoury smell of bacon came from the pan, I forgot my wrath entirely.

"Bake it crisp," I said, in a tone to appease her. "Fry some of your eggs, too, for I warrant that your tory mate has carried home good store from his last raid. You can cook a supper for a king's taste, I will warrant."

"What knows an English soldier of a king's taste?" she demanded, breaking the eggs into the pan.

"Little, in recent years, I grant you," I answered. "But on with the supper, and make haste."

Perceiving that everything was now going on well, I passed out and lifted my tired wife from her horse, holding her a moment on my heart as she slid down from her saddle.

By the side of the hut was a spring, where I gave her a drink and poured the water for her to lave her hands

and face, and she did the like for me. With a towel from the parcel at my saddle we dried ourselves, and then, feeling much refreshed, I sat her down beside the door. As our steeds were wearied likewise, I took the trappings from them, and tethered them where there was grass and water.

When I returned to the hovel the old woman gave us the supper in the pan, and Catherine and I quickly fell to with famished appetites. There were bacon, and eggs, and cold water, and plenty of it all, and, as we smiled at each other across the smoking pan, we agreed that we had never eaten a meal with more enjoyment. We took our time to it, and ate heartily and drank the water until we felt tired nature fully restored. And then we had a hearty laugh in our fulness.

"Will she let us stay here all night, John?" my wife whispered.

"There is but the one room," I answered, looking round, "and it is squalid and evil."

But the sharp ears of the old woman had heard both question and answer.

"My man and my son will be home soon," she said, savagely, "and they love an Englishman no better than I do. It would be well they find you not here, or the broken door and this supper will cost more than your purse."

I felt alarmed at this speech. If I had been alone I would have thought little of the two men she had spoken of. But I wished to evade all unnecessary danger on my wife's account; and so, giving her a piece of silver for the supper, I said:

"Then we will away. Is there another house near here where we could likely stay over night?"

"None nearer than Dublin," replied the old woman. Then, going to the door, she cried :

"The men are coming now, and there is a stranger with them ! Now shall I see my revenge upon you !"

"Quick, Catherine !" I said. "Throw your saddle on Bess !"

My wife followed me into the field, and our docile horses came at once to our call. Catherine was as expert as myself at the business, and, in a short minute, we had put on saddles and bridles and were firm astride.

The three men, not seeing us in the gathering darkness, had passed inside the house. In a moment I heard them cursing, and two of them quickly emerged with long knives in their hands and made toward us. The third man came quickly after them, carrying a sword, and as he drew nearer I recognised the Irish renegade, Lord Kilmac.

"Are you ready, sweetheart ?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then away."

We leaped our horses into the road, but not quickly enough to evade our pursuers. The three men threw themselves across our path and seized our bridles. I struck my sword upon the fellow in front of me, and he fell clear under my steed and rolled against my wife's black mare. Though wounded by my stroke, he raised himself and plunged his knife deep into the vitals of the poor beast. Bess, in the agony of her pain, made a mighty plunge, unseating Catherine, and then fell to the ground across the wounded tory.

Throwing myself off my horse I sprang in front of my wife.

"Quick, Catherine," I cried. "Mount Dick."

Lord Kilmac by this time had my sword in play. While we fought, the Irish woman came out from her hut, and, with shrill curses upon us, endeavoured to extricate her husband from the weight of the black mare's body, while her son was harassing Catherine with his knife. I pressed hard upon Lord Kilmac, and as he receded from me he came upon Bess. The mare was kicking her heels in the last spasm of life, and as Lord Kilmac backed against her, her hoofs shot out upon his legs and struck him to the ground. Without waiting to dispatch him, I turned towards Catherine. She was striking bravely at the fellow in front of her, and holding him off. I gave him a thrust which made him howl, and then sprang up behind my wife on Dick.

"Away!" I cried.

Dick stepped off briskly with his double burden. They had no steeds with which to give chase, and we were soon beyond the hearing of their fierce maledictions.

For an hour we rode on, and then the full moon came out to light our way, and we passed into a wood.

Stopping our horse, I lifted her down and said :

"There is nothing for it but to sleep here under the trees. Can you endure it, Catherine?"

"Yes, John."

I unharnessed and tethered the horse. Then, choosing a mossy bank where the thick arching foliage would shelter us from the dew, I spread my great cloak on the ground and told my wife to lie upon it, after first wrapping her up in her own. Throwing aside my cuirass and iron hat, I lay down beside her, and, after she had indulged her tears over the death of her beautiful horse, she placed her head upon my arm, and went to sleep like a tired child.



CHAPTER XXXV

BEARDING THE LION

THE night in the woods was cold. I had used all our wraps to keep my wife warm, and it was my own fortune to lie awake most of the time, benumbed and chilled. The moonlight fell upon the trees in a flood of weird beauty, and the stillness was broken now by the distant bark of the wolf and now by an owl hooting to his solemn mate. My wakeful fancy soon pictured the woods with hostile shapes ; tories and wolves seemed to surround me ; and my position as a discredited English soldier wandering alone amidst hereditary foes brought new perils to my mind's eye. The extreme hazard of my wife's situation was paramount to every other thought. Was not this a mad quest of mine after my forfeited position in the army ? Was the game worth the candle ? What right had I to lead my wife into the presence of the foes of her country, or to stir the earnest depths of her vehement nature by bringing her face to face with them ? Why had I not returned with her to England and sought for a blissful domestic life in my ancestral hall at Yorkshire, far removed from the loud alarms of war ? Why ? And then I answered all my own questions at once. Because of that desire in

the hearts of men after honour, which drives them away from true happiness to pull planets out of the sky.

I had not failed, during the past few days, to note a new disposition in my wife. The energy and fire of her character had become subdued under an influence which was thus far unknown to me, and she exhibited a dove-like fondness for me and a dependence on me in matters of the smallest import, which charmed and delighted, while it mystified me.

With the first break of dawn I rose from the mossy bank where she still slept, and paced up and down beneath the sylvan shade, endeavouring to stir my blood into that benign circulation which King Charles's physician, Mr. Harvey, had but recently discovered and explained to the astonished world. It was not long before my rugged strength overcame the night's lethargy, and I soon felt myself in a glow of health. I found Dick cropping the grass near by and led him for a drink.

Returning to Catherine, I pushed the cloak from her face and kissed her ruddy lips. She woke with a smile, threw out her arms with laughing indolence, and then, remembering from our verdant environment the journey that lay before us, she rose up and stepped backward and forward as I had done, for the blood's sake.

When I had put on my armour and helped Catherine to adjust her cloak, we mounted Dick and sped onward to the north. We had had nothing but a draught of water to refresh our bodies, but we were in good spirits and discoursed right merrily as we rode on.

When we had ridden two hours, and it was seven o'clock, we came to a hut where an ancient couple gave us hot porridge and sweet milch, and after that a loaf of bread to munch on the way. They also directed us into

an unfrequented road along which we might ride to our destination without great fear of molestation. Requiting their courtesy with silver, we resumed our progress.

The sun had gone one hour past the meridian when we came to the river Boyne, and soon after that we sighted Drogheda on the hill. The English army had completely invested the town on the three sides, while the sea cut off the garrison on the fourth side.

Before coming to the camp I held an earnest conversation with Catherine in regard to the method which should be pursued in my suit to the General. I desired Catherine, who of course was to pass for my page, to keep herself in strict seclusion until I should have an opportunity to learn my fate; but she declared she would not leave my side, and vowed, much to my trepidation, that if occasion arose, she would herself beard the lion in his den. No entreaties of mine could shake her determination; and so we pressed on until we came upon the English sentries. I then dismounted and walked on, while Catherine rode behind me.

I was immediately recognised, and the guard permitted us to pass within the lines without demanding the word. As we proceeded through the avenues of tents I answered all salutations with the gravest acknowledgment, and kept my eyes fastened, so far as could be, upon the standard bearing the buff Bible on a black ground, which floated over the General's tent. The siege was in active progress and the heavy booming of the guns from both armies sounded the dreadful note of war. It was understood on both sides that the siege of Drogheda was to be the test of General Cromwell's prowess. If he failed here, Ireland would continue in her course of mad an-

archy. If he succeeded, he would be a conqueror indeed, and no other stronghold could withstand him.

The operation of the siege was thus far in the hands of the artillery. The foot and horse had therefore but little work to do, and they were this afternoon passing the time in the usual pursuits of camp life. Most suddenly and unexpectedly we came into the midst of my own troop, and a yell of delight greeted my ears like welcome music. The soldiers pressed about us and asked a thousand questions ; but I commanded them to delay me not until I should meet the General. They obediently opened before us to the right and left, and many words of God-speed followed us as we passed beyond them. In a moment we were in front of General Cromwell's tent, and as I turned to look at Catherine I saw that the red flush of excitement was in her cheek even as I felt it burning in my own.

Lifting her from the horse, I threw the bridle to the General's orderly.

"Is the Lord General Cromwell within?" I asked.

"He is," replied the orderly.

"And alone?"

"Alone," he answered.

Summoning up all the resolution my character possessed, I stepped within the tent, followed closely by my seeming page.

Oliver Cromwell sat at a table immersed in the study of a map of Drogheda, and so deeply was his attention engaged that he paid no heed to our entrance. He was at this time just fifty years of age, and his thick brown hair, falling to his shoulders, was slightly tinged with grey. His head was of massive mould, and his face, now red and swollen with the wear of many campaigns,

and disfigured in its natural beauty by three warts, yet wore all the grand and noble dignity of a mighty soul. The steel blue of his eyes could gleam with a woman's tenderness or flash with the fury of incarnate death. His nose was large,—so large that his enemies ridiculed it in their lampoons. His brow was broad and furrowed, his lips were red and full ; his jaw was thick and square. A slight mustache grew upon his upper lip, and a very small growth of beard was on his chin growing not more than an inch below his mouth. His frame was large ; lacking two inches of six feet in height, and his shoulders were broad and strongly made. No man could approach him without an inward feeling of hero-worship ; and, as I turned my gaze for an instant on Catherine, I beheld that she, too, was wonderfully impressed by the greatness which dwelt about the man's personality.

"A strong position," muttered the Lord General Cromwell to himself, still absorbed in the map. "This ravine makes it almost impassable to an assault, and we cannot starve them out in three months. Eh !" he cried, beholding us for the first time. "What now ?—what is wanted ?—who is this ? What, not John Marmaduke ?" he said, with a suppressed fierceness in his tone.

"I beseech you to grant me an interview, General Cromwell," I said.

I could perceive that he was making a great effort to master his resentment.

"My order to you, Captain Marmaduke," said he, "commanded you, I think, to remain at Carberry Hall."

"Your order displaced me from my command, General," I replied. "It equalled a dismissal from the army, as I understood it. I came hither, therefore, to ask for a personal hearing."

There was an angry look on his brow, but he seemed to welcome the opportunity of expressing his mind to me.

"You yielded to the first fair face you met in Ireland. I thought you a man of stronger character, Marmaduke."

"One cannot shut the heart against love, General."

"But to love a Papist,—that were bad enough,—to *love* a Papist. But when an English Puritan falls so far from the obligation of life as to *wed* a Papist,—to link his life in marriage with an enemy of his God and his country both! Faugh! In one who hath done thy work in this army, Marmaduke, the thing is beyond comprehension."

"I can only say, General, that one looks not at faith or country when love lays hold of the heart. I found a woman beautiful above ten thousand——"

"The worse for you," he interrupted, "that you turned not your eyes from her."

"Beautiful," I continued, "not only in a woman's charm of face and form, but likewise in the purity of her soul."

He laughed harshly.

"You did ever seem reticent and not given to words beyond the vocabulary of the drill. Now I find pretty phrases and lovers' distinctions coming from you in plenty. And in what doth this paragon of Irish wenches surpass our English womanhood?"

The thing was cruelly said, and an involuntary start on the part of Catherine attracted his attention for the first time to my pseudo page. He eyed her narrowly, and then turned his great eyes once more upon me.

"There are English women as good," I answered,

quietly, "and there may be those who are as beautiful. But love comes not by comparison. This maiden was to me the superlative of maidens. Going there with my company, in the course of our affairs she was bereft of father and brother. I loved her, and as she was alone, I married her with but brief courtship."

"And now," said he, "you have tired of her, and have come away from her for a soldier's business once more. What becomes of this very lonely woman in the meantime?"

I could not, of course, answer his question, and the anger in his eyes deepened as he noted my hesitation.

"Not quite so perfect a man, after all, Marmaduke," said he, scornfully, "as I have hitherto thought you. You have deserted this woman, eh?"

"No, General," I answered.

"Come, come!" he cried. "We have had enough of this! That mad passion of yours has run its course, and now you come back like the prodigal son, leaving in that forsaken woman's heart an impression of English manhood which might be representative of the Cavaliers, but which should have no countenance among the hosts of Zion." He rose to his feet and his eyes blazed with wrath. "Back to your Papist bride, Captain Marmaduke," he cried, "or go whither you will so you stay not here, for you have unfitted yourself to do the Lord's work in Ireland. Men who fall so easily before the first temptation are not for great affairs. And yet,"— he paused, and looked straight at me,— "thou couldst have done great work by my side here at Drogheda, John Marmaduke."

"May he not still do great work," said a voice behind me, "by urging you to temper your war with mercy?"

I was amazed at Catherine's audacity in venturing such a speech at such a moment, and so, too, was General Cromwell.

"Who is this saucy stripling?" he demanded.

"My page, General," I answered, blushing at the guilt of a lie.

"Let me tell you, then, my Irish lad," said General Cromwell, "that the spirit of mercy broods not over this conflict. Know you what these countrymen of yours have done to our English settlers before we came hither? Know you what brought this army here to the great cost of England for its support? Your people hung and stabbed our English Protestants with ferocious delight. Noses and ears were cut off; women were abused, and had their legs cut off at the knees. Many persons were flung from the bridges to drown in the streams beneath. Thousands of men, women, and children,—yea, some of them helpless, prattling babes—were driven naked, through the cold November nights, and forced to the seashore, to starve or drown if they found no embarkation. It is all in Mr. May's history,—a matter of unquestioned record,—that more than one hundred thousand of the people of England were killed by these atrocious cruelties. Therefore have we come into Ireland with this army. And are we to show mercy to the murderers of our race who cower behind yonder walls with English renegades? The garrison in Drogheda are not Irish; I shame to say that more than four-fifths of them are English Royalists, so that Ireland cannot quarrel with us for whatever measures we meet out to those malignants of English blood. We offered them all full quarter to-day, if they would surrender, but they refused. The Lord do so unto me

if I call them not to a just accounting—Irish and English alike, for they are all equally guilty ! ”

“ My Lord General,” said Catherine, with a firm voice, while I trembled for her temerity, “ I have heard my father say that the stories of these massacres have been much exaggerated in England. But whether or no, your people took the land from ours, and it was a strife against oppression.”

General Cromwell was eying my pseudo page with an odd look of curiosity far from the rage which I feared her speech would rouse in him. Suddenly he turned upon me with an expression of withering contempt, and said :

“ Marmaduke, after the second battle of Newbury there came on my side of the river a gay Cavalier lord, whom I took prisoner, with his page. I knew him well, and he told me his page had followed him all through the war, and he besought me not to separate them in their captivity. The profligacy of that courtier, when I found his page a woman, did not astound me. But deep indeed are the depths of thy fall when you come here into the presence of a Godly host and demand the restitution of your command among honest men with a brazen wench beside you ! ”

This insult brought a hot flush of anger to my cheek, and I felt Catherine’s blazing eyes upon me.

“ Where, now, let me ask,” cried the Lord General, “ is this superlative wife of yours ? Hypocrite and profligate,” he thundered, “ out of my sight. *You* love a wife ! ”

I felt a pair of soft arms thrown around my neck and a brown head thrust upon my heart. Involuntarily I gathered my arms about the seeming boy, and my wife

turned her head from its retreat on my bosom and looked full at the great soldier.

"I am his wife!" she cried.

General Cromwell resumed his seat and fixed his eyes upon us in wonderment.

"What pretty play is this?" he demanded, still with deep scorn in his voice.

"It is true, General Cromwell," I answered. "Unable to endure the humiliation of my displacement, I prepared to come here and plead for the restitution of my command. This lady, the daughter of an Irish knight, and my beloved wife, would not listen to my proposal to go alone. She has therefore shared the perils of the journey hither, clad for better safety in the garb which was her brother's."

"And I join my entreaties to those of my husband," said Catherine, with a tender emphasis on the last word, "and appeal to that great compassion which he never tires of ascribing to you, sir, to restore him to the army. He has not married beneath his station, General Cromwell," she said, proudly, "and as for opinions, what concern should that be, save to ourselves?"

Now, true womanhood was a thing which Oliver Cromwell ever venerated. His devotion to his mother, his wife, and his daughters was known to the whole world. When, therefore, he beheld in this page's guise a lady of rank whose wifely love had brought her through danger into his presence, his wrath sensibly cooled. Catherine had, however, though unwittingly, challenged him to argument, and argument, especially when there was theology in it, was a thing precious to his soul. For a moment he studied my wife's face with a penetrating and curious gaze; and then he said:

"What concern indeed should opinions be, save to yourselves? Everything, where there is so great a gulf in opinion as between Protestant and Catholic. The State, in choosing men to serve it, takes no notice of their opinions. In England the lines of toleration are constantly widening, and Jew and Catholic are as safe there, praise God, as a narrow public opinion will permit. As time grows apace we would enlarge all this until free conscience may cling to whatever opinion it will, wherever it will, the world over. Yea," he cried, with rising inspiration, "we mean to extend protection to Papists in England, and by God's help, we shall demand the safeguard of Protestants even in Madrid,—in Rome itself! It is for the welfare of nations that universal toleration must come, at the cannon's mouth if need be. But as between husband and wife—" (Catherine had withdrawn herself from my arms and stood beside me with her hand clasped in mine. The General's eye beamed kindly as he contemplated our situation.)—"it is a clean different thing," he continued. "Marriage is like the union of Christ with His Church. How can that union be emblemed in the marriage of a Puritan and a Papist?"

Catherine's reply was spoken softly, yet with dignity and force.

"Love overcometh," she said; and that was all.

It was a text which struck his fancy. He smiled grimly.

"Perhaps it may," he said; "but I doubt it, oh, I doubt it! They tell me you are a woman of spirit and courage——"

"But it is not a *man's* spirit and courage," I hastily said.

"Thou art a watchful lover, Marmaduke," he said. "'T is a rash marriage, hastily made. Whether God will bless it, I doubt. Opinions so far apart are held too tenaciously even for love to bridge."

Perceiving how his words had drawn our faces long, he said :

"But perhaps God will look with favour on the exceptional grace of husband and wife in this marriage. Beseech him that it may be so."

Again there was a moment of silence. I had not yet heard the answer to my petition. He rose up and paced the room, darting now and then a hasty glance at us. Suddenly he stopped before us, and said :

"It hath given scandal to the army, Marmaduke. They know not the reasons as you have given them to me ; they know not the exceptional features of this case. There must be some mark of disfavour,—at least, of disapproval. Find a tent near thy troop, but take no part in their command at present. And come not again to me. Now go !"

We turned to depart with rueful faces. Our hearts were much cast down by the strictures he had seen fit to pass upon our new-wedded love, and my suit to him could hardly be called a victory.

"Stop !" he cried, and seized a hand of both. "Love overcometh, you say ?" he continued, looking into Catherine's wistful face. "So indeed it does. That thou art deeply in love with thy husband I can plainly see. That he loves thee needeth no witness. His place shall be given again to him, though not to-night. Retire now, both of you, until I send for him, and may God bless your love most bountifully."

His smile went gratefully to our hearts, and we passed

out of his presence with lighter steps. So much does the conduct of a superior affect the happiness of those beneath him, that men in authority should ever study to brighten the path of others by the incidental kindness which costs nothing and yet is more precious than gold.

Night was drawing on, and with Catherine beside me I led Dick back to the edge of the ground occupied by my troop. A knot of my men were waiting our return with eager curiosity. Taking Lieutenant Elijah Haddon aside, I told him that the morrow would perhaps bring a better understanding. He pressed my hand, and said he hoped it might be so. He then led us to my own tent, where, when he had seen us comfortably bestowed, he sent Rob Cumber with a bountiful supper, after partaking of which, being greatly fatigued by the occurrences of the day, we sought sleep,—I and my pseudo page.





CHAPTER XXXVI

DROGHEDA

THE enemy having refused to surrender on an offer of full quarter, our army set about to reduce their stronghold. By three o'clock in the afternoon following my arrival in the camp I noted that our guns had made a great breach in their wall, and had shot down the tower of Saint Mary's church beyond.

The whole of our horse and foot were drawn up in order to an assault which must soon ensue. But between us and the breach was a deep ravine with very steep sides, two hundred feet to the bottom. Our foot might pass down and up the sides of this ravine, but the horse must wait for the foot to carry the place, and then ride around.

Being impatient of the restraint of my tent while such great business was ensuing, I called Catherine, still garbed as my page, to follow me; and together we made our way through the deserted streets of the camp to the batteries, where the Lord General Cromwell was directing the operations in person.

He professed not to see us as we walked near and then passed him, but I felt assured that he was aware of our presence and resented it not. When five o'clock

arrived the breach was much enlarged, and General Cromwell ordered the storming column to form.

A thousand men fell quickly into line in ranks of twenty, with Colonel Castle leading. I observed that by chance my own troop took the extreme rear, with Lieutenant Elijah Haddon and Scoutmaster David Potton commanding. As the Lord General saw them take their place he turned his eyes once upon me, and I thought he would then and there have given me back my command. But it was not so.

“Prepare to storm!”

The words came from the greatest soldier in Europe. Muskets and pikes were gripped savagely.

“Are you ready?”

The answering shout could be heard by the enemy beyond.

“Then God be with you! Forward!”

With a wild yell the storming column sprang down the steep defile, and ten thousand of us cheered them on from our trenches. On the opposite wall the enemy appeared in force, and, with a great shout of defiance, opened a deadly fire of musketry upon our men. General Cromwell bit his lip and watched the assault with keen, blazing eyes.

Down went our men after Colonel Castle, descending the rocky valley with unfaltering resolution. Here and there a man fell shot to death by the fire from the wall. But the column never paused. It reached the bottom. It was now on the slope beyond. The hail of shot had given the battle-cry of the Ironsides a fiercer tone; there was a note of wounded rage in it. Higher and still higher climbed the English column. And now the breach is gained. They strike the enemy face to face.

Colonel Castle waves his sword and urges on his men. The resistance is fearful and a bullet cuts through his heart. The Ironsides waver as he falls in death. The besieged behold the havoc they have wrought. They press out upon the Puritans, who are swept down the glade and beaten back to the starting point.

I heard a cry as from a wounded lion.

"John Marmaduke," said General Cromwell, "take thy men to the front and lead the storm again to the breach!"

I sprang down amongst my men, who received me with cheers. Once more that beloved General formed the column and ordered it forward. My troop was this time at the front and there were some fresh companies behind us.

Down we went and struck the bottom, and then up, as before. The defenders, encouraged by their repulse of our first charge, encountered us more fiercely than ever. The green slope of the ravine was reddened with English blood. But still we pressed on. And now we were at the breach.

A mighty shout from across the ravine nerved us to the strife. But we had a stout foe to face, and in front were two English Cavaliers, Sir Arthur Ashton, the Governor of the town, and Sir Edmund Verney, son to the King's standard-bearer at Edgehill.

I crossed swords with Sir Edmund Verney, and our blades were in fierce play for a few moments. But the fire from the walls was making fearful havoc among our men. We could not force the breach against such odds. We fell back with all the disadvantage of the steep hill against us. I could not hold my men to the unequal contest; and we were all soon back on the other side—

all, that is, but a hundred brave souls who would never again respond to war's alarms.

But what grim figure was this that came amongst us? Some fresh troops fell in line; there was to be a third assault. Would the Lord General risk his person and the welfare of England by leading this charge? No man believed that his discretion would permit it. But it is even so. He passes quickly to the head of the column. He turns and seems to look every man through to the heart. A moment is given to adjust his helmet and breastpiece. His sword flashes out. And then, before he has uttered a word, the column shouts its mad enthusiasm and devotion, and the whole army back of us echoes the inspiring yell. Then came this from the Lord General:

“For God and our country! Forward!”

Down we went for the third time, feeling now that the conqueror was with us. Not a man in that column would have turned back now, no matter what the odds in front. To fight round the person of Cromwell was a privilege for which even death were a welcome cost.

Down we went, and then up, pressing close after the leader and uttering our high shout of battle. Our spirits rose as we neared the top, and we would make the enemy pay dear for his valour. Here was the pretty game of war in all its blood-red cruelty! And now we are at the breach.

Oh, how their bullets struck home amongst us! Would we never get at them with our swords and pikes? Here and there a man fell in our ranks. But we heeded it not. Noll was with us; his face was aflame with wrath; his eyes blazed with the spirit of incarnate war.

On we went. Now we are face to face with them.

The fight is hand to hand. And there goes Cromwell into the very breach himself—and through it. We are close behind him, and above the din of battle we hear the triumphant shout of the army across the ravine. Our main body has plunged down the steep and will soon be with us. The horse are making their detour and will enter when we throw open the gate. Our men have gained Saint Margaret's church and driven out the foe. It seems only a moment until our whole army is in the streets of Drogheda. Over the walls and through the gates they pour. The defenders divide and the larger part retreats down Duleek Street to the Boyne Water and over the bridge toward Saint Peter's.

But a large body of them with nearly all of their officers are forced back into a tower called the Mill Mount, fighting at every step. Our men surround them, and there is killing on both sides. An officer of ours demands their surrender on quarter, and for one instant there is a lull in the storm. Then we heard a voice which came as from the trumpet of an avenging angel. There was the memory of massacres in it, a contempt for religious delusions, a purpose to punish for past offences, to paralyse for future harm. It was from Oliver Cromwell, standing there with his flaming sword as the Genius of England, and speaking strictly in accord with the Law of War.

"Put all to the sword!" he cried. "Spare not any that are in arms in the town!"

Let not morality weep at the howl of approbation which then arose. Civilisation is but skin-deep, and war tears off the mask and lays bare the latent ferocity of men. Our troopers went at it as they had been told. Sir Arthur Ashton and Sir Edmund Verney fell, and all

the English commanders, and every English and native soldier. Then down the streets and over the bridge swept the spirit of Death, and up to Saint Peter's church. Here were a thousand of the garrison, and all fell,—all. Then in the roof and steeple of the church where some had flown, a fire was set, and what the sword could not reach the flames consumed. At Laurence's Gate and at Pigeon Tower the story was the same. Priests claimed protection for their garb, but none was saved. Women, and children, and old men, stood palsied with fear, and were unharmed. But no soldier in arms was spared. When night came on, three thousand of the garrison had been put to death. This was Cromwell's first fight in Ireland. Had he lost the battle his enemy would have inflicted a precisely similar penalty upon him.

From the moment the hard resistance ceased I had stood inactive at the Mill Mount and taken no part in what ensued. But Scoutmaster Potton had my men round him and he gave the Irish a terrible requital that night for his wife and son.

While I stood there, and after it was all over, the Lord General came before me face to face. Turning the light of his searching eyes into mine, he said :

"I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood ; and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future. These are the satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret. The officers and soldiers of this garrison were the flower of their army. It is a great mercy vouchsafed to us."



CHAPTER XXXVII

OVERCOME BY THE DRAGON

WHEN the cries of the last expiring foe had died away, and night had set her lamp high in the twinkling dome, I received permission to return across the ravine to seek for my pseudo page. My last sight of Catherine was when I had sprung from her side to lead the assault on the breach, and after that the fury of the action had made it impossible for me to give a thought to her welfare.

I now made my way down the steep declivity and up again on the other side, and came to the batteries where Catherine had last stood. She was nowhere to be seen. I wandered through the deserted avenues of tents, and looked within the tent which she had occupied with me the night before, but found her not.

In sore distress of spirit I picked my steps back to the batteries, knowing not whither to look for my vanished wife, when suddenly my attention was arrested by a group of twenty horsemen under the trees. Drawing near with stealthy step I listened intently to what they were saying, perceiving from the light of the moon that they were of the Irish.

“You say that the whole garrison was slaughtered?”

asked the leader of the band of one who was trembling on foot.

"All, except a handful, who, like myself, escaped through Laurence's Gate before the English reached it."

"Were the women and children killed?"

"No, the order applied to those in arms."

"Know you one Captain Marmaduke of the English army?"

"I know him not, but a troop that used his name for their war-cry surpassed all the others in the zeal which they used in the killing."

"There, Catherine!" exclaimed a woman on horseback, whose presence I now detected for the first time. "Thy husband has been the most guilty in this bloody massacre. You will not make further resistance to going with me and these trusted followers to my house in Cork, leaving this wretch to the judgment of Heaven?"

"But indeed I shall resist, Aunt Milucra," returned Catherine, who was astride a horse in the midst of the band. "I shall never believe guilt in my husband's conduct in any respect until I have first put the charge before him and heard his answer. As for this massacre, the fearful sounds of which have horrified my ears these past three hours, I will not believe any part of it can be laid to my husband after the garrison ceased fighting. And whether he be guilty of wanton cruelty or not, he is still my wedded husband, and I refuse to leave him!"

It was bravely spoken. The aunt answered her speech with hysterical mocking.

"Balor MacLuga," cried the aunt to him who had first interrogated the fugitive, "lead your men again southward. We have captured the runaway, and she

must have tender custody until her mind recovers its unthroned strength. Keep a hold of her horse there, and see that she give you not the slip. We may not have our way at Carberry Hall, but a smart ride of four days will bring us to my house in Cork, and there, Catherine, you may find repose until you recover your duty to Church and country."

"Aunt," cried Catherine, "I defy you to persist in this abduction. Know you not that the English soldiers infest every road? And after what has occurred to-night you will only bring a bloody revenge upon yourself and followers by injuring Captain Marmaduke? I do not sympathise with any part of the English policy; on the contrary, I detest both them and their acts. But my husband has no country and no faith, in my eyes, to separate him from me. I will not go a step with you!"

"Forward!" cried Balor MacLuga.

The cavalcade started to move, and Catherine screamed.

"Marmaduke, Marmaduke!" she cried, at her top note.

Now, I felt that if I had but a half-hour to cross yonder glen and bring my troop here I would punish these people even as Catherine had intimated to them. But there was no half-hour to be spared, for they were already carrying my wife away. Prudence was not for such an emergency.

"Here!" I cried, "I am Marmaduke! Draw thy sword, Catherine, and come to my side. Unhand my wife, knaves, or the fate of yonder garrison shall be yours!"

I was already in amongst them on foot, slashing at them right and left, and, in the moment of panic which

followed my words, Catherine contrived to slide down, from the horse on which they had mounted her and reach my side.

"He is alone!" cried Balor MacLuga, after I had slain three of his men. "Ride him down!" And he suited the action to the word by riding his horse full at me.

"Kill him, kill him!" cried the aunt.

Catherine stood beside me, and kept her sword bravely in play. Balor MacLuga came at me in front, while the others pressed in on all sides, and still I heard the aunt crying loudly:

"Kill him, kill him!"

I struck a blow at Balor MacLuga which would have cut through to his saddle had not my blade been caught by one of his men. Then there came a half-dozen blows on my iron hat which crushed it against my skull, and I fell to the earth with all my senses fast leaving me.

Catherine screamed, and threw herself headlong on my body to protect me from their rage.

"Kill him, kill him!" still came the words of doom from the Lady Milucra.

A soldier attempted to drag my wife from my breast in order to give me my quietus, when the tall form of Father Terhune pushed its way into the mêlée, and the priest cried:

"Hold! Do him no harm. I command it!"

And then I felt that I was dying, and no consciousness of earth remained with me. My spirit seemed to leave my body and go out into the blue universe, and then to soar among the stars in silence and alone.



CHAPTER XXXVIII

A PRISONER

TOSSING in the delirium of brain fever for many days, it was nearly a month before my conscious soul returned to its human habitation. I remember that when I first opened my eyes with reason behind them they fell upon the barred windows and stone walls of a castle chamber, which soon suggested even to my weakened mind that I was a prisoner.

I seemed to be alone, but was too weak to turn my head for a full inspection of the room. So I said,—and the faintness of my voice startled me :

“I would have a drink.”

Then a woman, whom I had not seen, threw herself beside me and clasped me in her arms, and nearly smothered me with warm kisses, and shed tears of joy upon my face, and said a hundred endearing things that I cannot now remember and only a woman can devise.

“Oh, my darling,” she said, in part, “my dear love ! I praise God and our blessed Lady that you have regained consciousness.” Then she kissed me with such tender murmurings and gentle fondling as would repay any man a long sickness. “I feared never to hear your voice in reason again. Indeed, you have been very near

to death. But now you will grow stronger from day to day, and we must both bless God for it, for I have had a mass said for your recovery every morning since our arrival here."

She gave me water and some medicine. Then I asked her with great effort where we were.

"In Wexford," she replied. "You are a prisoner to the Irish here, in charge of Captain James Stafford, commanding this castle. Outside is the town of Wexford, strongly fortified, and held by the Irish army and a thousand native pirates. Beyond the walls, besieging Wexford, is Cromwell and his army.

I attempted to ask further questions, but she prettily forbade me to waste my strength in that way, and said she would tell me all.

"Your life was saved, my beloved," said Catherine, "by the interposition of Father Terhune, and you were strapped to a horse and started with my aunt's party for Cork. Your sickness became so severe, however, that, on my earnest pleading, Balor MacLuga made for this town, and he and all my aunt's party are now of this castle. It is thought that this garrison will be able to overcome the English,—nay," she cried, seizing my arm, "do not think you can assist your party. You lack the strength of a babe. If David Sinnott, who is the Governor of the town, can beat Cromwell, then my aunt's plan is to continue her journey to her house in Cork, taking you and me with her."

"How long has this siege lasted?" I asked.

"For more than a week. The Governor has been treating ostensibly for surrender during all of that time, but really he has used the opportunity to bring in reinforcements, and now thinks his post impregnable."

"His treachery will cost him dear, I think. Have you been with me through all my sickness, Catherine?"

"Yea, my beloved," she answered. "It has been my blessed privilege to nurse you in your direst extremity. I have fed you like a babe and cared for you day and night, and now my reward is great indeed to have your conscious spirit back in its frame."

"My poor girl," I said, stroking her brown hair with a hand so thin it seemed scarcely mine. "You are greatly reduced by the loving task, and your cheek has a pallor I never saw in it before."

"That will all come right in God's own time," she said, cheerily. "And now I will run out and make you some broth. You are hungry, and it will nourish your wasted frame."

Bidding me rest in patience for a few minutes my wife left me. I endeavoured to sit up, but found it impossible to command my limbs. So I gazed idly at the door through which my wife had departed until it was suddenly opened, and an Irish officer of high degree stood in the aperture.

"Good day to you, sir," I said.

"My respects to you, Captain Marmaduke," he replied. "I offer my congratulations on your seeming recovery."

I thanked him and asked his name.

"Captain James Stafford, Commandant of this castle," he said. "At your service, sir."

"How goes the siege, Captain Stafford?" I asked.

"But for the treachery of our Governor it would go well," he replied. "He hath been tricking Cromwell from the start, and the reputation of your leader belies him if he do not get even,—at the expense of the whole garrison."

A thought came suddenly into my mind. I could see that the officer before me was of a weak and vacillating character, and the prestige of the Lord General Cromwell's reputation had weighed heavily on his imagination. Evidently he had the fate of Drogheda in his eyes. Perhaps I could play upon his pliable nature, and sick and imprisoned though I was, still do some good service to the Parliament's cause.

"If there be treachery in one quarter, why not in another?" I inquired.

"I fail to catch your meaning," he answered.

"Briefly this," I said, "for I have scant breath. Cromwell will soon storm your walls, and no military force in the world can resist his assault. You can win his favour—with gain, too," I added, "for his chests are full of gold. You and your men in this castle will then be secure of life, no matter what betide the Governor and the garrison of the town."

He was instantly caught by the bait.

"But how can Cromwell be approached?" he asked.
"How may he be made to trust my sincerity?"

"Draw this ring from my finger," I said, "and send it to the Lord General Cromwell with a statement of my condition here and of the proposition I have made to thee. Hush,—not a word to my wife!"

He stepped aside to permit Catherine to enter with the broth, and she at once began to feed it to me to my great delight, for I was nearly famished, having yet had nothing but milch.

"I find your husband much better, madam," he said.

"Much better, indeed," she answered. "But he must not talk. His face is flushed and his fever is higher than when I left him. John, dear, you have made an

effort to entertain the Commandant and have thrown yourself into mental excitement. I must forbid that in the future until you are stronger." This was said with a loving smile, and I felt a sense of disloyalty to my wife for having treated with Stafford of such a matter without her knowledge. Still I would not tax her high soul of honour with the treason I had planted in his heart ; it were better I should not. So Stafford made me many mysterious signs over my wife's shoulder, and went away carrying my ring with him.





CHAPTER XXXIX

"THE CURSE OF CROMWELL"

BY the next day, my wife's care and the nourishing food she had given me had so far restored my strength that I was able to sit up, and, indeed, I walked once across the room, leaning heavily upon her arm.

She beguiled the time by telling me much that related to our incarceration here. Her aunt had endeavoured to draw her away from my bedside, expressing the hope that I might die alone. Failing in this, Lady Milucra refused to speak to her or to have any intercourse with her, and had even withdrawn from the castle and taken quarters with an officer's wife in the town. Balor MacLuga and his band had also left the castle and joined the governor's garrison ; so that my wife was completely ostracised by her own family and retainers. She expressed no regret for this, saying that it was her aunt's purpose to break our marriage by fair means or foul, wherefore she thought it well for us both that she was not near us. As for Balor MacLuga and the rest of her servants, she declared that she would never again recognise them as such in view of their treachery. Father Terhune, she said, was loyal and trustworthy.

and as he was still here in the castle she hoped no harm would befall him.

We both longed for the war to end in order that all its miseries might be abated and that we might enjoy the sunshine of our love free from its adversities.

And while we talked at the barred window a strange thing happened. We saw a section of the English army approach the wall near the castle and throw up a scaling ladder. Two troopers mounted the wall without opposition, and then, drawing the ladder after them, they descended on the other side. They then took a key which they had brought with them and opened the great gate in the castle wall. Instantly there was a shout and the alarm was given through the town. But not a soldier of the castle, though many were on guard, stirred a hand in its defence. The English soldiers poured in by the thousand, and, paying no heed to those in the castle, pressed into the heart of the town. Other thousands of the Ironsides, led by the Lord General, assaulted the walls all along the fortifications, and, after meeting with but feeble resistance, passed over within the city. Here David Sinnott had drawn up his men and gave stout battle to the invaders. But they seemed not to know the art of war and they fell like stubble before the English. The thousand pirates who had long preyed upon English trade were among them and it was at these that the English directed their fury. They were slain, and the garrison with them, by the hundred. Some three hundred of them ran down to the river and sprang into the boats along the shore and pushed out into the stream there being some women with them; and as the boats were all overladen they sank, and all of their occupants were drowned. Among these women was the

Lady Milucra O’Fergus, and I shed no tears when I heard it.

The fighting was kept up until the whole garrison in arms was slain, numbering in all two thousand.

There was a loud knock at the door, and the Lord General entered the room. He took my hand in both of his with great cordiality, and bowed to my wife.

“John Marmaduke,” said Cromwell, “thou hast richly deserved our thanks and the Parliament’s. This day’s work has conquered Ireland. We have repaid her for her massacres and her piracies, and have requited yonder Sinnott for his double-dealing. Henceforth the progress of our army will be free from great difficulty. Men are already calling this campaign the Curse of Cromwell. We shall have much abuse on that score. The day may come when academic statesmen in England will refer to this policy as a blunder and a crime. But the Lord commanded His captains of old to smite His enemies and to slay whole nations; and verily now, even now, Jehovah hath directed our progress to the castigation of this people that they may be reclaimed from their errors and their fair land rescued from its disorders. Yea!” he continued, speaking in his inspired way. “Let it be the Curse of Cromwell! But it is the curse which acts against anarchy, and superstition, and murder! And out of all this bloodshed will come peace, and prosperity, social order, and commercial success, and the growth of a nation precious in God’s sight in the time to come. If the besom of destruction develop thus the loving hand and wise purpose of God, let it be called the Curse of Cromwell!”

He paced up and down the room in great excitement, talking on in this strain, developing his thought further,

and explaining and defending his policy. Catherine feared to have me grow too far excited by his discourse and led me to a seat, which he never observed. For twenty minutes he talked on rapidly, quoting many strong texts of Scripture and applying them picturesquely. "They have brought this thing upon themselves in many ways," he cried. "At Clonmel, where we stopped to receive their surrender, they invited our front guard into the town and then shut the gate and killed five hundred of Zion's host. Oh, in many ways have they deserved harshly of us!"

Suddenly he ceased, and came before the chair in which I sat.

"But where is Captain James Stafford?" he demanded.

"Here!" answered the commandant, entering the room with a terror-stricken visage.

"Thou shalt have thy gold," said Cromwell. "It will be paid to thee below. Then go hence with thy men quickly."

The thing was said with contempt, and the traitor made haste to shrink out of the glare of that thunder-laden face.





CHAPTER XL

THE SCOUTMASTER'S SUMMONS

AT the end of ten days I began to regain my normal strength, and the Lord General, wishing to do a gracious thing, ordered me to lead my company of horse back to Carberry Hall and hold that place in the Parliament's name until further notice.

Some few of my men had fallen in battle, and Scoutmaster David Potton was grievously wounded and unable to march with us. In truth, I was glad he was not with us, for my wife had sworn to kill him to requite the death of her father at his hands. But the chief part of the command was in fine condition, and Lieutenant Elijah Haddon promised to have them at the city gate ready for the march in one hour.

Catherine refused to permit me to make any great exertion, insisting, in spite of my protests to the contrary, that I was still a sick man who should conserve his energy. She prepared me for the ride to Carberry Hall, something like five-and-twenty miles north of Wexford. I found my iron back- and breast and steel cap much too heavy for my present condition, so they were given in charge to one of my men, while I donned a leather doublet and a soft hat of large shape. When I had

laboriously drawn on boots, spurs, and gloves, Catherine surveyed me with a pleased expression, and then declared that she must get herself in readiness.

I asked her if she meant to wear her boy's dress, which caused her to blush furiously and to tell me, with much pretty hesitation that it was no longer suitable. Now, this was a mystery to me, and the hanging folds of the graceful gown which she had worn while ministering to my sickness gave me no explanation. It may be that I was somewhat dull of comprehension, or else lacked observation, or mayhap was too ill to take note of her appearance. So I merely gazed at my wife with a look of curiosity. Then, as I watched her preparation for the journey, and she was drawing a girdle about her waist, she looked suddenly upon me, and her conscious face revealed her secret, which came over me like a great flood and engulfed me in its happiness. Springing to my feet I caught her in my arms and vowed to her a hundred times that I adored her now above all the earth, and that she was more than ever precious in my sight. She laughed and blushed, then wept, then laughed again, and made me tell her over and over that I loved her and was pleased by my discovery.

And so we joined my troop and rode off toward Carberry Hall. The journey passed without incident, and we reached the Hall by six o'clock and ate a supper of Rob Cumber's cooking. Father Terhune accompanied us, and some faithful servants of the Dillon family offered themselves, and Catherine at once began the reorganization of her domestic establishment, appointing cooks, butlers, and others who were to make our home comfortable.

My men enjoyed the garrison life of the place, and, as

their presence there was a military necessity, my wife made the best of it without complaint.

When two weeks had passed I felt my health fully restored, and one day when the cool autumn air invited me to exercise I mounted my horse, and, thinking to go only a few paces beyond the wall, rode out without escort, not stopping to speak to Catherine who was occupied within the house. The day was so delightfully invigorating, however, that I pressed on in high spirit until I came to the Lake of Darvra. The tiny boat was moored at the water's edge, with its white sail lashed to the mast. I rode past this boat and around the road where we had pursued Lord Kilmac's band, until I came to the secret entrance to the hermit's cave, and still on to the open mouth of the cave itself. And when I had come there I drew my prancing horse suddenly on his haunches, for right in front of me, peering over the rocky threshold and into the cave, was my Scoutmaster, David Potton. He was pale and emaciated, and his gaunt form was more wasted than ever; besides, he seemed to be weak, and suffering from unhealed wounds. But there was an expression of fear in his face now which was a stranger there, and it was his unexpected appearance in this startled attitude that caused me to rein up my horse in amazement. Right before his eyes were the decayed bodies of Lord Kilmac's Irish troopers, whom we had slain for their abduction of Lady Betty; but the Scoutmaster was gazing over these gruesome objects at something real or fancied beyond.

"David!" I cried.

He laid his hand upon his sword and turned quickly upon me. Then, recognising me, he beckoned me to come to him.

I sprang down from Dick and walked to his side.

"What is it?" I asked.

His bony finger pointed into the dark recesses of the cave, and his giant frame shook as with the fear of something supernatural.

I peered long and earnestly within, but nothing could I see.

"I heard it, I saw it!" he said, with chattering teeth.

"What?" I demanded: but no answer made he.

For a minute we stood motionless, straining our eyes.

"What is it, David?" I asked. "And how came you here?"

"I know not what it is," he answered. And then, turning his eyes upon me, he added: "A wild, weird thing, with the shriek of a fiend; an evil spirit, calling me to death and judgment, I think."

"Courage, man!" I cried. "Your wounds,—your journey hither, have filled your brain with idle fancies. Believe me, there is nothing. How came you here?"

His eyes roved with a pitiful apprehension from me to the dark vista of the cave, and from that to me again. Then he sat himself on a projecting rock and began to speak.

"I left Wexford yesterday morning," he said, "and rode hither, desiring to join my comrades in your troop, for it will soon be all day and good night with David Potton."

"Tut, tut, David," I said, cheerily. "You will live to strike many a blow for England yet."

"Never again," he said, mournfully. "The wounds I got have done the business. I think I slew one hundred of the Irish in Drogheda and Wexford with my single sword. Lord Kilmac fell before me at Wexford.

"Did he lead a troop there?" I asked.

"No, they would not trust him with a command. He fought as an adventurer."

He told me this without any air of boasting,—his tone was filled with the deepest melancholy.

"One hundred of them," he continued, in a voice that I could scarcely hear, "a flying victim at every stroke. The last one struck at me with a dagger,—close to my heart it went. I had ridden thus far when a ghastly figure at the secret entrance fascinated my eye and then disappeared. I rode around to this entrance and once more I saw it and heard its cry, just before you came. It beckoned me within—to the darkness—to death."

"Comfort you, David," I said, soothingly. "'T is but thy fancy."

And then he sprang to his feet, and at the same instant I clutched his wrist, and we both quaked as with the palsy, while our ears cracked with the wild shriek that came from within the cave.

"Look!" cried the Scoutmaster.

There was no need to bid me look, for I was transfixed with attention. Two eyes gleamed at us through the darkness like coals of fire, while a half-shrouded figure limned itself in faint outline on the black gloom of the cave. And then it vanished.

"In God's name, what is it?" I demanded, feeling that my blood was near congealed with horror.

But before he could answer there was borne out to us a prolonged peal of satanic laughter which anon grew fainter as if the mirthful fiend were retreating into the dark recesses of the cave. But still we heard it like a mockery from infernal dungeons. And then, while we

quaked in the presence of this weird mystery, the laugh rose again in a volume of evil sound and was mingled with a woman's cry of deadly terror.

"It is a summons to me!" cried the Scoutmaster, his eyes starting outward and a sweat as of death bursting from his face. "I saw my wife and son in a dream last night. I will follow this thing. Farewell, my Captain!"

"No, David!" I cried. "You shall not stir!"

But he had already leaped over the bodies of the dead warriors, and, with sword in hand, vanished into the darkness beyond.

In a moment I heard the laugh again, and then the scream. Then there was a period of silence that seemed an eternity. Then an agonised cry from the Scoutmaster, a fiend's laugh, and yet again a woman's scream. And then the stillness of the grave.

I stood there not knowing whether honour bade me go within and face a score of devils at my friend's side, or whether a man's duty absolved him from contact with evil spirits. For a long moment I paused on the threshold like a haunted man, staring within at the blackness. Then I saw two eyes starting out at me, a woman's arm raised holding a bloody sword, a woman's form in white apparel. More bold the outline of the figure grew until it had stepped, fainting, over the dead bodies, and then, throwing away the dripping sword, it gave me one appealing, horror-laden, soul-stricken look, and fell unconscious at my feet.

It was my wife.



CHAPTER XLI

THE MYSTERY OF IT

WITH great difficulty I had brought my wife home and deposited her unconscious form upon the bed. And then, while her maid was doing all that could be done for her, I paced the floor in an agony of spirit that I had never suffered before.

Had it, indeed, come to this, then, that this adorable being had stained her pure soul with murder in order to gratify an ignoble and useless revenge upon a dying man? Had she adopted the black art itself in order to decoy her victim into a dark chamber and there despatch him with his own sword? Did she not know that to conceive and execute so much infamy she must destroy my love for her and fill my mind with loathing for her crime? Could she have expected that after the consummation of such a heinous design I would constrain myself to tolerate her as a wife, or even to live in the same house in daily contact with her? No! The more I passed the awful affair through my mind the more firmly grew my resolution to break with her forever. But then—oh, God!—our child!

A deep sigh from the bed drew me involuntarily to her side. Dismissing the maid, I seized her hands in

mine and chafed them vigorously until she opened her eyes and gazed vacantly upon me. A shiver ran through her frame, a frightened glance swept round the room, and then, bursting into a pitiful sobbing, she threw her arms round my neck, and, in spite of my somewhat feeble resistance, drew my face down against her own.

For a long time she gave way to her tumultuous emotion, but so deep was the resentment in my soul, that I made no effort to calm her troubled spirit. After a time she ceased her weeping and released her hold upon me, and then rose from the bed and tottered to a chair, wondering doubtless at my failure to lend her my support.

"Oh, was n't it terrible?" she cried.

I made no answer.

She kept her head in her hands for a moment. Her beautiful brown hair was dishevelled and she was a picture of woe.

"When I learned that you had gone for a ride," she said, without raising her head, "I longed to be with you. They told me you had ridden toward the lake; so I mounted a horse and rode after you. The way it came about was thus——"

She was going to confess it all! I would hear it from her own lips, and then would fly from her presence forever. And yet how beautiful she was,—how innocent she looked!

"When I came to the secret entrance to Triscadal's cave," she continued, "I caught sight of your horse standing beyond at the main entrance. Thinking that you had dismounted for the purpose of exploring the cave, I planned to go in by the secret way and surprise you by meeting you in the darkness within. I had

picked my steps cautiously until I came to the narrow ledge by the bottomless pit. Here the darkness was so intense that I almost repented of my temerity. But I groped slowly along until I caught sight of the opening into the large room, and by the light which came in I saw not only you and the Scoutmaster, but much nearer to me, and doubtless invisible to you, was the insane hermit, Father Triscadal himself, alternately shrieking and laughing in horrible levity."

My heart began to beat again. What was this revelation that was coming?

"Fearing to attempt to pass him through the narrow aperture," my wife proceeded, "I drew back to the narrow ledge. Then, as he suddenly turned and came toward me, I shrieked wildly, hoping to attract your attention. The Scoutmaster came through the opening, and Triscadal stopped when he found himself pursued. He waited for the Scoutmaster to draw near him and then sprang upon him, and a deadly battle ensued. I heard them both cry out, and the Scoutmaster seemed to run his sword through Triscadal. Then the hermit drew it out and threw it on the ledge near where I crouched in terror. I seized it intending to defend myself with it if necessary. But just then the two men grappled each other in a desperate embrace, and, doubtless by force of the superior strength of the wounded madman, they were plunged headlong down the frightful chasm together, the poor Scoutmaster joining his cry of agony to the triumphant laugh of the maniac. I made my way to the opening more dead than alive, still holding the sword; and I know not now whether I am awake or dreaming, so horrible are the impressions which fill my mind."

I threw myself down at her feet and seized her in my arms and called her by a thousand endearing names. I asked her in every way in which I could form the words to pardon me for my cruel suspicions. I uttered reproaches against myself in deep scorn, and implored her not to believe that I could ever be worthy of so perfect a wife, but to love me notwithstanding. And she received all my caresses lovingly and said I was speaking in riddles, for I was the finest man in the world.





CHAPTER XLII

CONCLUSION

BY favour of the Lord General Cromwell, I remained at Carberry Hall with my troop all through the winter and spring which followed the events described in the preceding pages. There was some serious fighting done at the front, but our army was invincible, and every day it captured a town, a castle, or a garrison. When early summer came Ireland was conquered and pacified.

From the time of Queen Elizabeth, nay, from the time of Strongbow, the English policy in Ireland had been to seize the lands and plant the English settlers on them. Our English Parliament now ordered this practice to be followed, and a great many of the Irish were transplanted beyond the river Shannon into Connaught. But while there was much hardship and much anguish inflicted on the native inhabitants through the enforcement of this ordinance, it was but the eternal result of invasion and war. Besides, while many hundreds were transplanted, many thousands were excepted from the operation of the law.

Despair and indolence drove many Irishmen to join

the tories, and the wild hordes of human beings in the mountain fastnesses increased until they menaced the public order and safety as perilously as the very wolves.

Several thousand Irishmen sought service in the wars on the continent, where they made good soldiers. Some of these men marched away behind their native pipers, who played the mournful air, "*Ha til, Ha til, Ha til, mi tulidh!*"—(We return, we return, we return no more.) But most of them, having a fortitude which always begets lightness of heart, chose to leave their native shores to the very lively tune of "Garryowen."

Our soldiers, settling upon the vacated lands which were given to them for arrears of pay, married the native Irish women, until the Parliament took alarm and devised severe penalties to restrict this habit.

But in my household at Carberry Hall it was ever love without war. As time sped on it came about that God brought into our keeping a little maid with hair and eyes like her mother's. And really I knew not then which I loved the most; for the wee one had a way of closing her chubby hand over my great finger at night, when, fearing to waken her unseasonably, I would lie a prisoner for an hour, gazing at her through the candle-light with constant admiration and pride. It was wonderful how so small a body could fasten herself upon our heartstrings, for we had scarcely a thought beside her.

In the autumn which ensued, my mother sent us some rich gifts, with loving greeting to our child; and told us how Lady Betty and Lord Alfred Paddleford had but recently been married, with much felicitous comment upon their true love.

The Lord General Cromwell was recalled to England

to become Commander-in-Chief of all the Parliament's armies. Soon thereafter he led an army into Scotland, and, doing what the English kings had tried in vain to do for eight hundred years, he subjugated that country to the dominion of England as thoroughly as he had subjugated Ireland. England and Ireland are filled with his growing fame and people say that he will soon rise to higher station.

General Ireton, his son-in-law, who was left in Ireland as his Lord Deputy Lieutenant, showed me much consideration until his death a few months later. Then General Fleetwood and Colonel Henry Cromwell were in supreme direction, and both of them treated me well. I made my post at Carberry Hall and held charge of all Irish affairs within the county of Wicklow, having thereby much and important business on my hands at all times.

But I find all the happiness of life in my association with my wife and our little maid. The latter is now near three years old, and she talks to me incessantly from her perch on my knee as if no one else had ever a thought to speak. When I stand her on a chair and say, "Look what a big girl!" she swells until her mother vows she will burst with baby pride.

I love my wife above all the world; yet I would not change my religion for a wife. Nevertheless, I do believe that true religion is a thing of the heart and not of the brain. The wear of conflicting opinions in Ireland, though impelled by bigotry on each side, is perceptibly producing a broader field of religious thought. I behold it in my wife; I have long felt it in my own heart. Father Terhune is dead this past year. I protected him while he lived, but now, under the English law, no one

may succeed him. I bless God that I and Catherine and our little maid are fast growing into one spirit of divine peace ; for the light which is sufficient unto the saving of their souls shall guide mine along the same pathway to eternal felicity.

THE END



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